Empirical Dogmatics

Volume 1

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Metropolitan of Nafpaktos
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Empirical Dogmatics

of the Orthodox Catholic Church

according to the Spoken Teaching
of **Father John Romanides**

Volume 1
(Dogma - Ethics - Revelation)

Critical Presentation

Birth of the Theotokos Monastery
(Pelagia)

To

Fr. ***George Metallinos***

and Mr. ***Athanasios Sakarellos***

'fellow-pupils'

in the teaching of Fr. John Romanides

whom they greatly loved

as a teacher of the Orthodox tradition

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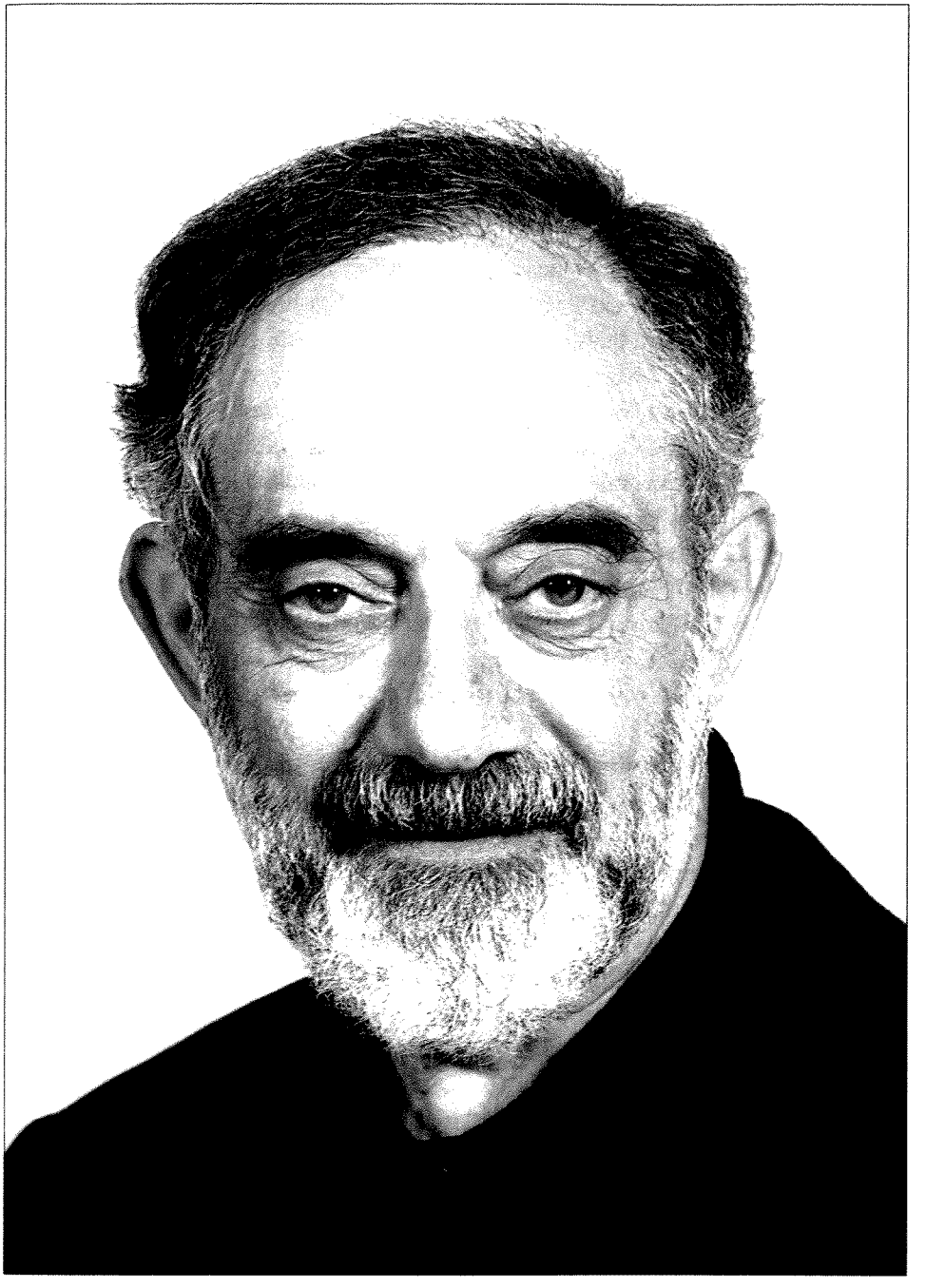

December 1998, © Peter Williams / WCC

Preface to the English Edition

I feel particular joy that the book Empirical Dogmatics (Volume 1) *has been translated and published in English. This joy is justified by the fact that Fr. John Romanides grew up and studied in America, knew all the theological trends that prevailed in the Western world, and provided answers to them through the Orthodox patristic tradition.*

Fr. John Romanides studied in the Theological Schools of America (Holy Cross, Yale, Columbia, St Vladimir's and Harvard). He was a faithful pupil of Fr. Georges Florovsky, but the course of their lives was different, as Fr. Georges Florovsky made his way from the Orthodox East to the West, whereas Fr. John Romanides started from the West and reached the Orthodox East, expressing the genuine patristic, ecclesiastical and philokalic spirit that was the answer to scholasticism and moralism in the West. They had, however, common interests and shared the same orientation.

Anyone who reads the teaching of Fr. John Romanides realises that he links experience closely with knowledge, theoria with praxis, the monastery with the parish, the professor's chair with the ascetic's hermitage, the life of the early Church with the contemporary Church, which is governed by the theology of the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers.

The translation of this book into English will delight Fr. John Romanides particularly, as he greatly loved the Church in America and was interested in its spiritual progress. He wanted the Christians of America to be imbued with the teaching of the Fathers and to refute non-Orthodox interpretations of the Christian life that have evolved in the course of the centuries. He himself wrote: "I feel an obligation towards our Church in America."

I thank the nun Pelagia, who translated this book, and Dr. Efthimia Mavromichali, who read the text and made some important comments. I also thank the Abbess of the Holy Monastery of the Birth of the The-

otokos, the nun Silouani and her sisterhood in Christ, who published this book in English.

May the English-speaking Christians who will read this book and benefit from it rejoice in the words of one their own people, who lived and grew up in America and spent most of his life there, and may they pray for the repose of his soul.

Written in Nafpaktos on
the 21st November 2011,
the Feast of the Entry of
the Mother of God into the Temple

† The Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Hierotheos

Introduction to the Greek Edition

Father John Romanides of blessed memory, Professor of Dogmatics at the Theological School of the University of Thessaloniki, was no ordinary theologian.

I did not have him as professor, because his tenure of the Chair of Dogmatics at the Theological School began after I had graduated from there. I knew him initially from his writings, and later I came to know him personally in Athens, after his retirement. We were in close touch with one another, almost on a daily basis, at the time when he was living in Athens in 'theological solitude'. Later, when I became a Metropolitan, he asked me to record his name on the lists of priests in my Metropolis, once I had received his discharge certificate from the Archdiocese of America, to which he belonged as a priest.

Mr Athanasios Sakarellos was in contact with Fr. John over many years. He was Fr. John's solicitor and Fr. John also gave theology lectures in his office to a close circle of people, among whom I had the honour of being often included. He once said to me that Fr. John was born in the wrong era. He should have lived in the 4th century, when the great Fathers of the Church lived.

It is a fact that anyone reading or listening to Fr. John Romanides realised that he expressed the theology and life of the Fathers of the 4th century: of the great Cappadocian Fathers of the Church and the ascetics of the desert, as we see it in their writings and in the 'Sayings of the Fathers' and the 'Evergetinos'. Fr. John Romanides is a 'remnant' of the 4th century who lived in the 20th century. Or, to put it more aptly, he was a 20th century theologian, actually a professor of a Theological School, who had nevertheless been carried back to the 'spirit' of the 4th century saints and who gave it expression.

Fr. John Romanides does not, of course, express a theology of his own but the theology of the Church. He relies on the experience of the

*Prophets, Apostles and Fathers, as expressed through purification, illumination and glorification**, *and experienced in noetic prayer of the heart and the theoria-vision of God. This theology is not connected with the scholasticism or moralism that were cultivated in the West and transferred into our part of the world as well, either directly from the West or by way of Russian theology, which fell under Western influence, particularly in the time of Peter the Great.*

The keys to empirical theology are man's progress from being in God's image to being in His likeness, from the state of being a servant to being a paid worker and a son, from purification to illumination and glorification, from selfish love to unselfish love. It is a theology of revelation, which is connected with man's glorification and is subsequently formulated in dogmas and teaching for the cure and guidance of other members of the Church. The basis of Orthodox theology is as simple as that.

Fr. John spoke as a professor of dogmatics, but also as an ascetic. Reading his words, I sensed that he had some experience with regard to spiritual matters, but I am not in a position to verify the extent or degree of his experience.

His teaching expresses the theology of the Church and is very simple. It refers to the Fall of man and his salvation, the vision of the uncreated Light, the expression of this experience and the method by which someone acquires spiritual experience. We see a circle, like we find in the works of the holy Fathers. Fr. John himself said:

> *"Orthodox theology is circular in form. It is like a circle. Wherever you touch the circle, you know the whole circle, because the whole of the circle is the same. Everything leads up to Pentecost: the Sacraments of the Church, such as Ordination, Marriage, Baptism, Confession etc., the decisions of the Councils and so on. That is the key to Orthodox theology: Pentecost. So someone who reaches glorification after Pentecost is led into all truth."*

This reminds us of the amazing text preserved in 'The Mystical Theology' of St Dionysios the Areopagite. There "the divine Bartholomew" is quoted as saying that "Theology is both vast and minimal, and the

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* **glorification** = *theosis*. See 'Note by the Author' p. 23 – Translator's note

Gospel is wide-ranging and great, yet briefly stated." St Dionysios adds, "The good cause of all is both eloquent and taciturn, indeed wordless. It has neither word nor understanding, since it is above all these in a way that surpasses being, and it is made manifest clearly and truly only to those who go beyond all things both impure and pure..."

The words of Fr. John Romanides do indeed show us that theology is both vast and minimal; great and briefly stated; eloquent, reserved in speech and wordless. Thus, when presenting theological subjects he often analyses them at length, but at other times he is succinct and concise. In this sense Orthodox theology, which is not only the word about God and divine things but also the experience of God and divine things, is both simple and profound. It repeats itself but is also implicit. It can be expressed both positively and negatively. It is experienced by and refers to the vision that is above human sight and hearing, that transcends sight and hearing.

Fr. John Romanides often talked about the issues that I have mentioned. I had in my possession tape recordings of many of his talks. Some of them had been delivered at the University or various halls, but mainly they were lectures and discussions that had taken place in the solicitor's office of Mr Athanasios Sakarellos. I transcribed these talks and collected them together in four volumes.

From this spiritual treasure I have picked out a few extracts in order to present an account of empirical dogmatics that is distinctly different from other forms of dogmatics. All Fr. John's spiritual riches find ample expression through these texts. At certain points, so as to complete his teaching, I have used extracts from his books, 'Patristic Theology' and 'An Outline of Orthodox Patristic Dogmatics'.

I repeat that the extracts from Fr. John that will be quoted are transcribed from tape recordings, so his spoken word is preserved unchanged and retains its distinguishing features. His words are forceful and convey the liveliness and warmth of his character. There are times when Fr. John expresses himself in a categorical manner, using provocative words against certain institutions and situations. Because he grew up and studied in America, his Greek is occasionally less than perfect. Overlooking all this, however, the reader should focus on the wealth of Orthodox theology that his words reveal.

This first volume is to some extent introductory. Apart from the in-

troduction and some indispensable biographical and autobiographical material on Fr. John Romanides, it presents his teaching on the relationship between dogma and ethics; on the experience of revelation; on the bearers of revelation, who are the Prophets, Apostles, Fathers and saints; and the living monuments of revelation, which are Holy Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, and Holy Tradition. The common factor linking all the chapters and specific sections is the experience of God's purifying, illuminating and glorifying energy.

The second volume is to follow and will refer to Fr. John Romanides' teaching on empirical knowledge of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, Christology, cosmology, anthropology, ecclesiology and eschatology. This is a different kind of dogmatics, which comes through the experience that anyone can acquire by living within the Church and being sanctified by God's uncreated grace through the sacramental and ascetic life.

Various repetitions can be observed in Fr. John's teaching. This too can be explained by the circular character of Orthodox theology, as we mentioned earlier. No one can speak about the Fall of man without referring to the darkening of the nous and the loss of communion with God. We cannot discuss man's restoration and ignore the teaching on purification, illumination and glorification. It is impossible to be concerned with the glorification of human beings and to know nothing about the revelation of the unincarnate and incarnate Word. It is unacceptable to talk about the Church and not to know that the holy Sacraments are linked with the method of purification of the heart, illumination of the nous and glorification.*

There is also a close link between the four chapters that follow, as they discuss the revelation, the experience of revelation, the bearers of revelation, the living monuments of revelation and how the revelation becomes dogma and ethics.

Repetitions are natural and necessary as regards the mystery of man's salvation and defining the issue of the spiritual life. The Apostle

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* **Nous:** the eye of the soul, the purest part of the soul, the highest attention. We use the transliteration of the Greek word because translating it as 'mind' or 'intellect' is misleading. The nous or noetic faculty is not the same as the '*logiki*', the 'reason' or 'rational faculty' of the soul. – Translator's note

Paul expressed this perfectly: "For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe" (Phil. 3:1). When something is taught only once it is forgotten and overlooked, whereas repetitions are recorded in the memory and heart. When we read the works of the holy Fathers, we see the emphasis placed on the central truths of the revelation, around which they structure their ideas. Thus an unbroken unity exists.

Of course no one is infallible and neither was Fr. John Romanides. However, the 'spirit' of the theology that he taught is the theology of the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers, and accords with the teaching of the Orthodox Catholic Church. The reader should perceive this 'spirit' of his teaching, which is the essence of the patristic tradition. I would recommend, even beseech, the reader to look at Fr. John's teaching in its entirety and not to pick out one phrase, take it in isolation and draw conclusions that are contrary to what he says elsewhere. For instance, what he says about dogma should be examined alongside what he says about the revelation of God. His statements about Prophets, Apostles and Fathers ought to be studied together with what he says about uncreated and created words and concepts, and about Holy Scripture and Tradition. This is the only way to gain a complete picture. Otherwise the reader does an injustice to the truth of his words.

I have been occupied for a very long time, over twenty years, with 'Empirical Dogmatics' and I have constantly glorified God that I am a member of the Orthodox Church, that I knew Fr. John Romanides, and that this treasure of his spiritual inheritance came to me.

I believe that it will help many readers and will give a new perspective to the understanding and experience of dogmatics in the Orthodox Catholic Church.

Many people assisted in various phases of the work of preparing this first volume for publication. Mr Athanasios Sakarellos gave me many tape recordings. Abbess Photini of blessed memory and the nuns Joanna and Kalliniki of the Holy Monastery of the Birth of the Theotokos (Pelagia), George Georgatos and Helen Papadopoulou-Georgatos transcribed the talks from the tapes. Mary Iliopoulou, Sissy Serafetinidou, George and Helen Georgatos entered the handwritten transcripts of the tapes onto the computer. Dr. Vasiliki Melikidou prepared the subject index. Anastasios Filippides and Dr. Efthimia Mavromichali trans-

lated various texts from English into Greek. Archimandrite Kallinikos Georgatos and Fr. George Papavarnavas entered my handwritten notes onto the computer, and the former undertook the final formatting. Professor Eleftheria Serbeti and Dr. Vasiliki Melikidou looked at the final draft and made important linguistic comments. The Abbess of the Holy Monastery of the Birth of the Theotokos (Pelagia), the nun Silouani, and her community took care of the publication. I offer my heartfelt thanks to them all and pray that God may bless them abundantly.

The final selection of the extracts and linking them together was very laborious and took me a long time. I ask for the reader's understanding.

I felt it was a particular honour to be working on these subjects, in accordance with the teaching of Fr. John Romanides. I pray that God may grant rest to his soul in the land of the living, on account of his hard work and zeal, because all his life long he was aflame with the Orthodox theology of the first Church and he brought all its 'spirit' and liveliness into our era.

Written in Nafpaktos
on the 6th August 2010,
the Feast of the Transfiguration
of our Lord Jesus Christ

† The Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Hierotheos

Note by the Author

Fr. John Romanides made a thorough study of Western theology, which has been influenced by scholastic and Protestant theology. He also knew Orthodox theology very well, as it has been formulated by the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers. In particular, for the Orthodox Church's theology on hesychasm and the vision of God, Fr. John Romanides relied on the teaching of St Gregory Palamas, which was upheld by the Council of 1351. For this reason he uses a special terminology with regard to the experience of *theosis* and the *vasileia* (glory, rule, kingdom) of God. This terminology corresponds to the 'spirit' of the teaching of the Fathers of the Church.

In this book, which has been translated from Greek, it has been considered right, out of respect for Fr. John Romanides, to use his own terminology, as the book contains extensive quotations from his spoken words. An additional reason why the terminology of Fr. John Romanides is used in this book is that there are published writings of his with this specific vocabulary in books and periodicals, as well as on the internet. If the usual vocabulary that prevails in the English-speaking world were to be used in this book, it would conflict with the writings of Fr. John Romanides in circulation.

This note mainly concerns three terms:

1. The term *'theosis'*

Theosis is a patristic term. It was used by the Fathers of the Church to convey the scriptural terms 'justification', 'sanctification', 'perfection' and 'glorification'. It derives from the Greek word *Theos*, 'God'. The human being who to various degrees participates in the uncreated grace of God is referred to as *theoumenos*. This is a gift from God to man, who acquires participation in God.

In order better to convey the meaning of the term *theosis*, Fr. John

Romanides prefers the scriptural term 'glorification' (participation in the glory of God).

In this book, therefore, for the term *theosis* and its derivatives (e.g. *theoumenos*) the term 'glorification' will be used instead of the term 'deification', which for the most part prevails in the English-speaking world, and 'glorified' will be used instead of 'deified'.

2. The term '*vasileia* (glory, rule, kingdom) of God'

The term '*vasileia* (glory, rule, kingdom) of God', according to the patristic tradition and especially the teaching of St Gregory Palamas, means the uncreated Light of God.

Christ said to His Disciples: *"Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom* [*vasileia* in Greek] *of God present with power"* (Mark 9:1). St Gregory Palamas explains that His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor followed immediately after these words. Thus seeing the *vasileia* of God is the theoria (vision) of the uncreated Light on Mount Tabor during the Transfiguration of Christ. It follows that participation in the uncreated Light is participation in the *vasileia* of God, which comes *"with power"*, through the energy of the Holy Spirit.

In the light of this teaching, in order better to convey this reality and to distinguish it from created reality, Fr. John Romanides uses the phrase 'the glory and rule (*vasileia*)', instead of the term 'kingdom', which prevails in the English-speaking world.

In this book, instead of the customary term 'kingdom', the phrase 'the glory and rule (*vasileia*)' will be used.

3. The term '*Papikos*'

Fr. John Romanides uses the term 'Papal' (*Papikos*) instead of the usual expression 'Roman Catholic'. In accordance with the general principle that we should respect his terminology, we follow this usage.

I think that we should respect the views of this great theologian and generally his terminology, which he adopted after much study. The reader of this book should take the above points into consideration in order to understand the words of Fr. John Romanides.

Biographical and Autobiographical Information on Fr. John Romanides

To help the reader understand the following chapters we need to mention a few biographical and autobiographical details about the personality of Fr. John Romanides, particularly those relating to his theological message and the 'philokalic' foundation of his teaching. Fr. John combined his academic training in the major centres of theological study of his era with discipleship and study in the neptic-philokalic-hesychastic* tradition of the Orthodox Church. He owes his theological teaching to this combination. [3]

The basic sources of his biographical, and essentially autobiographical, information are his talks and the book by Fr. George Metallinos entitled *Protopresbyter John S. Romanides*, with the subtitle *The 'Prophet of Romanity' portrayed through unknown or little-known texts*. That book sets out some unknown letters that Fr. John sent to Panagos and Katingo Pateras and their daughter Irene. Some additional information will be drawn from other texts, but also from his spoken addresses.

1. Brief Autobiography

Fr. John Romanides set out some of his biographical details as follows:

"My parents were from the fortified Roman city of Arabissus in

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* **Neptic** = ***nēptikos*** in Greek, a technical term in the hesychastic tradition meaning watchful and vigilant with regard to thoughts (*logismoi*) to ensure that they do not enter the heart. The corresponding Greek noun ***nēpsis*** is translated as vigilance or watchfulness. **Philokalic** refers to the ***Philokalia***, a collection of texts from the neptic and hesychastic tradition. **Hesychastic** comes from the noun **hesychasm**, which refers to a specific spiritual method of practising **hesychia**. **Hesychia** in the ascetic context means inner stillness, the peace of the heart, the undisturbed state of the nous. – Translator's note

Cappadocia, the birthplace of the Roman Emperor Maurice (582-602). He was the one who appointed St Gregory the Great as Pope (590-604), who in turn appointed Augustine as the first Archbishop of Canterbury (597-604).

I was born in Piraeus on the 2nd March 1927...I left Greece and emigrated to America on the 15th May 1927 (when 72 days old), with my parents. I grew up in the city of New York, in Manhattan, on 46th Street, between 2nd and 3rd Avenue.

I am a graduate of the Greek College, Brookline, Massachusetts and the Theological School of Yale University. I have doctorates from the Theological School of the National Capodistrian University of Athens and the Philosophy School of the School of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University. I am Professor Emeritus of the Theological School of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki and I have been Visiting Professor of the Theological School of St John of Damascus of the University of Balamand in Lebanon since 1970."[1]

He was a married priest and had two daughters, but he spent most of the time living as a monk in the world and an academic researcher. His sister, Parthenia, whom he loved very much, lives with her family in New Zealand.

He departed this life on the 1st November 2001. He had just come out of the Church of the Holy Unmercenary Physicians in Aiolos Street, Omonia Square, where he had gone to pray.

2. His Family Environment

Fr. John's parents were born and brought up in Cappadocia in Pontus, so he boasted of being a Cappadocian.

In one of his letters he writes about the death of his father:

"My father had a good and painless death and we thank God for that."[2]

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1. Fr. George Metallinos, *Protopresviteros Ioannis S. Romanidis*, Armos publications, Athens 2003, pp. 56-57 – in Greek
2. Ibid. p. 139

He said of his mother:

"There is a problem when we touch on man's freedom. I always remember that my mother used to say to me, 'Son,' she would say in Cappadocian*, 'Son, you can't force someone to be a saint.'"

He gave his own interpretation of his mother's words:

"Of course a human being cannot become a saint by force. Everyone has to choose the path of therapeutic asceticism."

One day the child John told his mother that the choir had sung nicely in church. She replied:

"Son, we don't sing songs in church. In church people chant, they don't sing songs."

He writes about his mother in a letter:

"My mother is well and most of the time she stays in the monastery and cooks for them and helps them in different ways."[3]

Sister Orthodoxia of the Monastery of the Annunciation, Oinoussai Chios, writes in a letter to Fr. George Metallinos:

"This blessed woman from Asia Minor was devoted to prayer. She would pray and make many prostrations. As a little boy, Fr. John would watch her and laugh: 'Why do you keep on doing prostrations?' And she would reply: 'Make fun of me, Johnny...you will be a priest.'"[4]

We have little information about Savas, Fr. John's father, but we do know that he was a simple man and a good Christian, and he worked as a tailor. Various characteristic pieces of information about his mother,

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* **'Cappadocian'** – *ta Kappadokika* – is a Greek-Turkish mixed language spoken by Greek Orthodox Christians living in Cappadocia in the Turkish region of Central Anatolia until the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in accordance with the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. For further information see: Mark Janse (ed.), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society. Language Contact and the Written Word,* Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002, pp. 332-390 – Translator's note

3. Ibid. p. 166
4. Ibid. p. 85

however, survive, as she followed Fr. John to Greece. She was received as a novice at the Monastery of St John the Theologian at Souroti near Thessaloniki on the 17th January 1971, was professed as a nun of the great schema on the 4th May 1973 and had a saintly end.

Father Lambros Photopoulos, with the help of the sisters of the Monastery who looked after her, presented us with an excellent article. It vividly portrays the spiritual state of the nun Evlambia, Fr. John's mother. Various significant details about her life will be taken from that source.

She came from Arabissus in Cappadocia and grew up in a 'philokalic' atmosphere, with an intense life of worship, fasts and prayers, especially with the Jesus prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ Son of God (breathe in) have mercy on me (breathe out).' At the age of twelve she lived through the slaughter of her parents. But that turned her towards Christ and the Church. In fact, she would say in her simple way that the All-Holy Virgin used to appear to her and guide her in her life.[5]

She prayed to God from early childhood. Somewhere she wrote:

> "When I was twelve this is what I prayed: Paraklisis, the six Psalms, Compline, Old and New Testament. That is how I passed my time. I did not let those words out of my mind day or night. Good Lord, do not deprive me of Your good things, of anything at all, may I hear Your words. Keep me, my Lord, from unseemly things by Your help. Lord, according to Your commandment, as You know best, Lord, whatever my voice utters is Yours. The Queen, our All-Holy Virgin, by her intercessions and the prayers of the saints... And You are Blessed by them all for ever and ever. Amen."[6]

She married Savas Romanides and they called their first child John, because they had vowed to dedicate him to St John the Russian. They baptised him at the Monastery of the Saint in Evia. Having come from Cappadocia to Greece, in 1927 they emigrated to America. They lived in Manhattan, New York and earned their living with a tailoring business. In this way they brought up their two children, John and

5. Protopresbyter Lambros Photopoulos, *I Gerondissa Evlambia Romanidou*, in the periodical *Efimerios*, June 2003, p. 11 - in Greek

6. Ibid. pp. 11-12

Parthenia. Although they lived in that cultural atmosphere, the environment did not influence them at all.[7]

She played a vital role both in the conversion of her daughter Parthenia's husband to Orthodoxy and in the creation of an Orthodox Church in Christchurch, New Zealand, where her daughter lived permanently with her family.

After her tonsure as a nun she lived to an even greater degree the monastic life that she so loved and in whose atmosphere she was already living. She acquired the gift of noetic prayer and also the gift of spiritual insight. With great simplicity she explained to Elder Paisios that she saw him praying in his cell on the Holy Mountain. Elder Paisios commented, "Gerondissa Evlambia has spiritual television." When they asked her about her spiritual experiences, she would reply, "Everyone sees like that. I used to see saints from when I was a little girl. They told me, my child, not to say anything. Bad for me and bad for you." She once told a nun at the Monastery, "You think I am asleep. I see angels. The church is full of them."[8]

She had a blessed departure from this life. Things turned out as she wished throughout her life. She used to pray without ceasing, "May my name be written in the book of life. Give me a peaceful Christian ending to my life..." From the age of twelve she mused on death: "Lord, grant that I may not put death out of my mind." At the end of July 1979 Gerondissa Evlambia became much weaker due to pain. She often said, "Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Fri..." She left the word 'Friday' unfinished. The sisters asked her, "What are you saying, Gerondissa? What is going to happen?" She replied, "Well, what is going to happen, my child? I am going to die. When life ends, my child, the world ends. Only save your soul, my child, your soul, nothing else." She would talk about death. When a sister asked whether she would take her with her when she died, she replied, "When you are ready, my child, God takes you. Do you think it is something easy? It is difficult, my child..." She often took Holy Communion of the Most Pure Sacraments and felt joy. She was found worthy of divine visitations from St Panteleimon, St Nektarios, St Paraskevi and St Euphemia.[9]

7. Ibid. p. 12
8. Ibid. p 14
9. Ibid. p. 13

She passed away in the afternoon of the 6th November 1980. She did not want any of the sisters to stay with her during those hours. A nun who passed her cell heard her talking to someone, although there was no one inside. When the sisters who looked after her came, they found her dead. Father Paisios was asked by one of the sisters about the state of Gerondissa Evlambia's soul and he replied, "Gerondissa Evlambia is fine where she is. She departed like a twelve-year-old girl. She is very well."[10]

I have dwelt on the account of some elements in the life of Fr. John's parents, particularly of his mother, to make clear that it was not only Fr. John who resembled the patristic figures of the 4th century, but his parents too had the characteristic features of Christians of that century. Despite living and working in the heart of America, they remained genuine Orthodox Christians within the ascetic and philokalic spirit of the Orthodox Church.

3. Studies

Fr. John believed that oral tradition is significant and valuable, but the criteria of the tradition are of greater value. He said:

> "Of course a criterion can simply be what my mother and grandmother told me. What the priest told me when I was a little boy in the sanctuary. Someone may have inherited criteria from the environment in which he lived, and may sense that something is not right, but not know exactly why it is not right. He may sense – have an intuition, so to speak – that something is not as it should be, but he may not know how to analyse why it is not right."

He was educated at a Papal* school where, as he relates, they gave him Thomas Aquinas to read and he reacted against his theology. In a spoken address he recalls:

> "I was a pupil in a Papal high school. From the age of sixteen I started learning the theology of Thomas Aquinas. I remember the awe with which the boys used to go to confession. There, you know, the Papal Christians have a little box for confession. The penitent

10. Ibid. p. 14

* **Papal (*Papikos*)** = Roman Catholic. See 'Note by the Author' p. 23 - Translator's note

goes into a box and the priest into another. It is a cupboard, this confessional. The priest doesn't see the penitent..."

His basic language during his studies was, naturally, English. He heard the Greek Cappadocian language at home and later on he was taught Greek. That is why he said,

"I certainly didn't know Greek well; perhaps I never learnt it well."

From an early age he was instructed in the tradition of the Church. For that reason he said:

"From a scientific point of view, it is better not to know Orthodoxy, that is to say, the Orthodoxy of the university, because if I, for one, speaking personally, had known the Orthodoxy of the university, the chances are that I would be an atheist today instead of a believer."

Fr. John Romanides' studies were significant and resulted in a number of theological publications. In 1949 he received a degree from the Holy Cross School of Theology, Boston. In 1954 he received a degree from Yale University, and in the academic year 1954-55 he studied at the Orthodox Theological Institute of St Sergius in Paris.[11] Meanwhile he also studied at Columbia University and at St Vladimir's Theological Seminary in New York, when Fr. Georges Florovsky was professor and Dean, and in Munich, Germany.

"It may be of some interest that I started my studies of Thomas Aquinas as a high school student under the supervision of a former Dominican. When I went to Holy Cross I was encouraged to continue in this line by my professor of dogmatics. Aquinas had become popular in Greece at the time because of John Karmiris' translation of the *Summa*. When I went to Yale I was rudely awakened with the anti-scholastic theology of the Protestants. That's when I decided to continue the biblical critical method of research of the Protestants into the patristic period where I found that the presuppositions I was discovering there were radically different from those of Augustine who had become the foundation of both the scholastic and Protestant traditions."[12]

11. Fr. G. Metallinos op. cit. p. 24
12. Letter to Andrew Sopko, 1 May 1995

In 1955 Savas Agouridis, later to become a professor of the Theological School in Thessaloniki, translated into Greek a study by Fr. John Romanides entitled *The Anthropology of the Great Prayerbook*. The translator's note is significant:

> "This essay by the Reverend John Romanides, a priest of the Orthodox Church in America, is a completely pioneering work in a field where no one has ventured until now. It requires a profound knowledge of Orthodoxy and youthful audacity to undertake this task. Fr. Romanides combines both harmoniously. Certainly, as happened in the circles of the Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris, here too his effort will be praised by some and criticised by others. The fact is, however, that publishing such innovative studies is, beyond all doubt, always highly beneficial. It is unnecessary to point out that the author takes sole responsibility for his views. We shall soon have the opportunity to hear him expounding his views in person. The translator feels particular satisfaction to be revealing the theological efforts of Fr. Romanides here. The translation was made from the unpublished English manuscript." [13]

This very apt note by Savas Agouridis shows Fr. John Romanides' pioneering and innovative work and the positive and negative reactions provoked in Paris theological circles, and later in Greece, precisely because he was breaking new ground. It also shows Fr. John's personality, which combined "a profound knowledge of Orthodoxy and youthful audacity". His arrival in Greece was awaited, so that these issues could be discussed. We should note that Fr. John was then 28 years old.

In the spring of 1955 Fr. John came to Athens to work on his doctoral thesis, which he submitted to the Theological School in Athens in 1957. After that he studied at Harvard, where Georges Florovsky, regarded as the greatest Orthodox theologian of the 20th century, was a professor[14]. Fr. John writes "They all regard him as the best Orthodox theologian in the whole world." [15]

The subject of the doctoral thesis that he worked on in the Theological School in Athens was *The Ancestral Sin*. It played an impor-

13. Periodical *Kivotos*, April 1955, p. 94
14. Fr. G. Metallinos op. cit. pp. 144, 174
15. Ibid. p. 174

tant role in turning theological studies in Greece in the direction of the authentic patristic tradition. In this way it helped to free them from Western theology and link them with patristic theology.[16]

It is clear that Fr. John studied in major university centres and actually boasted about it. He said:

> "One day I was at a reception, in a house in Kolonaki, no less... We professors are part of the establishment, you see. They invite us to various meetings. Well, at the table they put me next to the commercial attaché of the American Embassy. Of course, I speak American perfectly, without an accent, having spent forty-three years in America. We introduced ourselves. He told me which Universities he had graduated from. I told him my own Universities and my degrees. 'I graduated from the two best Universities, the two most aristocratic,' I said. 'Ah!' he said. That impressed him. Because the other man graduates from some minor American university and you put him down at once, and you immediately gain respect."

His studies were initially philological and philosophical, and later theological. He said:

> "In America we first have to go through the mill of philological and philosophical education and afterwards we go on and study theology as a postgraduate programme of studies."

He therefore clearly discerned that philosophy is something different from the history of philosophy.

> "At least where I come from, that is America, for someone to say he was a philosopher would be ridiculous. Even the professors of history of philosophy in America would be embarrassed if someone called them philosophers."

He had studied history and had actually specialised in researching historical events.

> "I am, however, obliged as a researcher and historian – because my own special subject is history – as a historian I am obliged,

16. cf. Protopresbyter John S. Romanides, *Encheiridion (Katagrafi enos theologikou dialogou)*, Armos publications, Athens 2009 – in Greek

when I undertake historical research and find certain things, I am obliged to inform you."

The specialisation that he chose at Harvard University was Islam.

"I was, fortunately, obliged to study because I had to take examinations. You know, I did Islam as a major special subject in America at Harvard University."

At Harvard he had professors who were secular scholars of great renown. He said:

"When I was at Harvard I had two professors there who were pupils of Albright - the great Albright - who had been very much involved with the Dead Sea discoveries. We had them as professors. And at Yale where I was, I had Burrows as a professor. He too was involved with those Dead Sea discoveries. In the Boston area the text we usually used was the history of the Old Testament by Pfeiffer, who was a professor in Boston. So we had grown up in this tradition of Western thought. Albright and his professors gathered every year to confer among themselves. They discussed what to do about Wellhausen's theories. At home I have a complete copy of the Old Testament that I marked up with the symbols J, E, D and P. We had to learn them for examinations. But in America none of Albright's school accepts that division any more."

All this gave him a different view of things. When he came to Greece and saw professors of theology with a high opinion of certain foreign theologians, he was surprised. He said:

"But what do the people here do? They grow up in Greece feeling inferior, as Greeks do, because that is what they teach them in schools here in Greece: to feel inferior. They go to America and find some idiots there whom they mistake for scholars. But I grew up in America and we used to laugh at those wise men, those men whom the Greeks think are wise. I remember what a shock I had when I came to Greece and heard Alivizatos saying, 'Ah, the English clergy! They are real clergy!' We had no respect for the English clergy."

On another occasion he said of the theories that were brought to Greece from the West:

"I laugh, because I grew up with these theories in America."

His professors included the great theologian, Fr. Georges Florovsky of blessed memory. Fr. John said:

"I remember Florovsky of blessed memory. He was my professor in America for many years and we lived in the same apartment building."

Speaking about his studies in history and Islamic theology, he states vividly:

"In America, when someone does a doctorate in Byzantine history, for instance, one of the branches in which he can specialise - one of the three or four special subjects in Byzantine history - will always be Orthodox theology and iconography. Those two go together. Someone becomes a Byzantinist in America when he knows patristic theology - the basics, that is. Part of his studies is devoted to it. He cannot be regarded as well-educated unless he knows patristic theology: it is a pre-requisite.

Now, I personally have a second special subject in Islam, which I did in America for my doctorate. So it is unthinkable for someone to study Islam without doing at least a year of Islamic theology or to specialise in ancient Greco-Roman civilisation without a special knowledge of the religion - the ancient religion, that is - of the Romans and the ancient Greeks.

When I came to Greece I heard our philologists boasting that they knew nothing about theology. They think that this shows how learned they are. As if someone who knows theology must be prejudiced, and in order not to be prejudiced one should be ignorant about theology.

It amazes me how they manage to read mediaeval texts and study history. How can anyone understand Heracles, for example, if he does not know the theology of Heracles, or Justinian, if he does not know his religious convictions and why he acted as he did on particular issues?"

He retained a great deal of the methodology of research from his studies in America and used it in theological matters as well. He said:

"I am saying this as an American, so to speak. I grew up in America. We have a methodology of research that in Greece neither the theologians nor even the philologists understand. I see that even the philologists all chant slogans here in Greece. The ones who understand it are the people in the positive sciences."

Every academic researcher is a pragmatist, not an ideologist. He explained:

"I, for one, am from America, and the Americans are pragmatists, not ideologists. In everything he does, the American tries to find a correct descriptive analysis, to describe it correctly. Next, on the basis of this correct descriptive analysis, he applies a methodology to produce a result. For the American this result is the truth... (If he does not succeed) it is not true, something is wrong, and we must start again from the beginning to find out how to achieve our purpose. This happens in every branch of learning. There is no discipline in which success is not the criterion of truth."

Pupils in America learn the basis of research from childhood, according to Fr. John's account:

"In America at least we grew up in such away as to be prepared for research and the like. When you heard something you neither accepted nor rejected it. Whatever you heard, you would listen to it with interest. Here in Greece, Greeks have been brought up in such a way that they immediately rush to take sides. It made an impression on me when I first came to Greece. As soon as you open your mouth to say something, Greeks feel obliged to take sides. They have become psychopaths. From the foreigner's point of view, Greeks are psychopaths.

Someone who, as soon as he hears something, feels obliged to take sides either for or against it, has something wrong with his brain. He is not well, because as soon as you hear something, the correct response is to listen with great interest and to take note of it. Afterwards you should find out as much additional information as you can about what the speaker is saying, and then suspend your judgment until you can check it. In order to check something, you need to acquire a great deal of information, but also interpret-

ative keys. How will you check it if you do not have interpretative keys?"

Once he described the manner in which scientists in America work and collaborate among themselves:

"In the West you attend a circle of professors; professors there usually meet in circles. Once a month, once a fortnight those who work in related fields meet together. When someone has something new, when he does some research and wants to hear the opinion of the others, he reads a short paper, two or three pages, perhaps five pages long. He reads the paper and says, 'It seems to me that this or that has something new to offer.' The other professors speak, once he has finished. The discussion begins and someone says, 'Ah! What you have told us is very interesting, because it helps me to understand what I have found.' And he too mentions a few things that he has discovered. He completes what the other speaker said, and he lends support to it in a way.

Afterwards someone else says, 'Yes. You know, what you have told us is all very well, but I have found this and that and the other.' And the one who read the paper says, 'What are you saying? I had not noticed that! Thank you very much.' He goes so far as to thank him, because he informs him of things that he was unaware of. So in the end the paper is completed, and the one who wrote it does not leave with exactly the same views as he had before. He has now harmonised his knowledge with what the others said. Something has changed.

Afterwards they write books and give them to specialists. For instance, a biologist writes a book or an article and gives it to a few other biologists, and asks them, 'What do you think of this?' They sit down: 'Ah! Yes. You are right about that...I found something like that.' And he completes the author's work, so to speak. Someone else makes a correction, and in the end you see that he thanks them both, because they read the manuscript and made comments. Because of them, he says, the text was improved. He draws it to everyone's attention and wants other people to read it and, if they can fill in any gaps, he wants to hear about it, because the aim is research and the discovery of the true facts, and so on.

Well, here I have never seen in a preface that a professor of theology has given a manuscript to a few others and thanks them, because they have read it and made comments and helped to improve the text. I have never seen anything like that! Are you aware of such a book? It is out of the question. Whereas foreign books - German, English, French - are full of prefaces like that. I think that it depends on how they teach children in primary school.

It seems that here in Greece knowledge is usually a hotchpotch of slogans, catchwords, etc. Everybody knows that. Today, in the 20th century, a nation cannot survive with this sort of orientation. It is unacceptable.

Particularly in theology, I think that dialogue should have begun between Orthodox theology and the positive sciences years ago. But it is very difficult because here pioneering research studies usually have to come from Washington, London, Moscow, or somewhere else, then our people follow on behind. They do not do pioneering research because that provokes reactions..."

In America he was familiar with the whole eudemonistic spirit, which influenced the way of life, and even religious life. He also taught his students about it. He said:

"When I was teaching in America, I used to say that the doctrine of the pursuit of happiness (eudemonism) is spiritual capitalism. It is the profit that someone makes in order to satisfy his desires, either in this life only, or both in this life and in the life to come.

The sociological and social consequences of the doctrine of the pursuit of happiness are immense, because Western civilisation, what we refer to as Western civilisation, was built on the foundations of Augustine and Aristotle."

Fr. John studied in Europe as well as America. In 1954-55 he studied in Paris and Munich. Having an investigative mind, he observed everything critically. We come across this in one of his talks:

"When I left America I came to Europe and studied in Europe, many years ago now. The problems in Cyprus were just beginning then, under Papagou, in 1954-55, and I followed what was happening on the radio... The movements were beginning then in Cyprus. It made an impression on me. Three revolutionary movements

broke out at the same time, which from an objective point of view were exactly the same. There was the Hungarian uprising against the Russians, the Algerian uprising against France, and the Cypriot uprising against England. Do you see my point?

In the Anglo-Saxon and French news broadcasts I followed how they were described. The Cypriots were always described as terrorists. 'The terrorist Cypriots of EOKA.' That was all you heard: 'terrorists'. The Algerians were described as 'revolutionaries'. They were revolutionaries. They were doing the same thing... The Hungarians, however, were freedom fighters. Well, the Hungarians were great heroes, because they were fighting the Russians, who were enemies of the Americans. Next came the revolutionaries, the Algerians, because they were against the French, who are not quite so close to America. But England and America are cousins, so the Cypriots were terrorists. It made an amazing impression on me to see this tendency and the way news was transmitted. Because all three were happening at the same time. I was in Munich then."

Between 1957 and 1965 Fr. John taught as a professor in the Holy Cross School of Theology, Boston. On the 12th June 1968 he was chosen as professor of the Theological School in Thessaloniki. He took up his post, however, in 1970 and retired in 1987. Through his studies in various university centres he knew the greatest teachers from all the Confessions (Papal Christians and Protestants), but also from the Russian diaspora. This gave him a sense of theological and academic sufficiency, so he did not feel himself to be at a disadvantage.

Anyone following Fr. John's studies and academic career can observe that he attended a Papal high school and studied at Protestant theological schools, but also at Orthodox theological schools, which had, however, been influenced in his time by Western scholastic theology and Protestant theology. He was not, however, at all influenced by their way of thinking, but sought and found Orthodox theology in its neptic expression, as it was lived and formulated by the Fathers of the Church. And there he remained. He had very clear views on theological issues and the tradition of the Orthodox Church, and he confirmed and verified his opinions by meeting ascetics, but perhaps also to some extent from his personal experience.

His theological and ecclesiological course was admirable. Everyone admits that his doctoral thesis, *The Ancestral Sin*, was the starting point for theological activity not only in the Theological School in Athens but in Greece as a whole, and was a landmark in theological literature. The theological shift in the sixties in the direction of the true sources of Orthodox patristic theology is due, among many others, also to Fr. John Romanides, then a young theologian, who had grown up in America and studied in Papal and Protestant schools and theological faculties, but had found the Orthodox theological tradition in all its purity, unmixed with alien elements. Perhaps his priestly and pastoral ministry and his keen intelligence helped him in this.

He said in a spoken address:

> "The greatest problem for Greece is perhaps the national change of direction, which was accompanied by a change in ecclesiastical affairs as well.
>
> When I came to Greece I could not understand how modern Greek theology originated from the theology of the years of Turkish domination. Because there do not seem to be many points of contact between these two types of theology. Theology under Turkish domination is not the same as that taught at Halki Theological School."

He said the same of Athens University, as he knew it. That is why he emphasised, "It is important to find interpretative keys." In all his teaching and all through his theological career he spoke about finding and using 'interpretative keys' for accepting genuine theology.

The theological course followed by Fr. John Romanides is truly astonishing. This is the background against which we should view everything to be set out in this book.

4. His Priestly Ministry

In parallel with his studies, he satisfied the desire that had also been nurtured by his home environment and was ordained Deacon and Priest in 1951, while still a student at the Theological School of Yale University. From 1951 until 1954 he served at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Waterbury in Connecticut. In 1954, after his studies, he was transferred to the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New York City."[17]

17. Fr. G. Metallinos op. cit. pp. 23-24

Following his return from Greece, he served occasionally in various parishes of the Archdiocese of America, as we learn from the letters published by Fr. George Metallinos. In one letter he writes:

> "By reason of the holy days of Great Week and Easter I am now in Sioux Falls, South Dakota [1959], 1300 miles away from my family. I was sent here in order to serve a newly-established community of about 150 souls."[18]

In another letter he writes:

> "I am now in the hills of Newport, New Hampshire [1963], where a handful of Greeks have a tiny little church, but lack the means to support a priest. I have been coming every weekend now since September. I have sorted them out to some extent and they are in a fairly good state now. But going to and fro has been very tiring for me. The distance is about the same as Athens to Lamia. Public transport is not good. I come by car and leave my family on their own in Boston. But tomorrow, God willing, they will come and we shall celebrate Easter together."[19]

Elsewhere he writes:

> "We returned to Boston last Tuesday and found out that I have been appointed to a new parish in a suburb of Boston, in Arlington [1959-65]. I was therefore very busy organising everything in order for the Liturgy to be celebrated in the church for the first time yesterday. Today we celebrated the Liturgy for the second time. The church was full yesterday with about 400 Orthodox Christians."[20]

During the period 1965-68 he was also parish priest of the parish of the Holy Apostles in Haverhill, Massachusetts[21].

During his tenure as professor in Greece he did not take on a post as a parish priest. From time to time, however, he celebrated the liturgy in various cities, particularly Athens, where he stayed for a longer period of time. When he attended church on Sundays and major feasts he took Holy Communion in the sanctuary.

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18. Ibid. pp. 141-42
19. Ibid. p. 166
20. Ibid. pp. 171-72
21. Ibid. p. 25

I graduated from the Theological School in Thessaloniki in 1968, so I did not have Fr. John as a professor, because he had not yet taken up his appointment, although he had been elected. I read his writings and was enthusiastic, but I had no contact with him. In 1987, however, when I moved from the Metropolis of Edessa, Pella and Almopia to the Metropolis of Thiva and Levadia and subsequently to the Archdiocese of Athens, Fr. John had retired as professor, and I became closely acquainted with him. I used to attend the exposition on theological subjects that he gave in a close circle of people in the office of the solicitor and theologian, Mr Athanasios Sakarellos, together with Fr. George Metallinos and others. I would also attend his talks: some given on a regular basis and others on special occasions. In particular, at one time he used to speak every week at St Marina's Church in Heliopolis.

The greatest blessing for me, however, was that we used to have long telephone conversations almost every day. Usually he would telephone me to tell me about a theological opinion of his, but sometimes I would telephone him to ask him about various ecclesiastical and theological issues.

Fr. George Metallinos bears witness to this:

"From the time of the 'stroke' in 1997 until his death (1st November 2001) we were in touch almost every evening by telephone and discussed theological and ecclesiastical matters, as well as exchanging views on all the current social problems. He was on the same terms with His Eminence Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos) of Nafpaktos and St Vlassios, whom Fr. John deeply respected and of whose theology he was proud. Of course, we were not the only ones who were honoured with his friendship, but I am speaking about my own experiences with him. Because he was always full of doubts about his Greek (which was very good in other respects), he did not hesitate to send whatever he was writing to Metropolitan Hierotheos and myself by fax, so that we could check the language but also express our views. Through this contact it became clear how unjust his critics were. He knew very well who those people were who approached him to further their own interests, or in the hope of discovering possible negative points that could be used against him. If, as a man living in the midst of many problems and difficult circumstances, he might perhaps have something negative

about him, we overlooked it. We only looked at his theology and how he related to it personally. We admired his asceticism, his foolishness for Christ's sake and all his devotion to the patristic tradition. In fact he evaluated his acquaintances and colleagues, clergy and laypeople, according to their attitude to the patristic tradition."[22]

When I held the post of preacher in the Archdiocese of Athens, I went on his initiative to a seminar in Vancouver, Canada, where Fr. John and I were the only teachers. We taught for three days, for many hours each day. Clergy and laypeople attended from all over America and the range of issues covered by the Seminar related to the Orthodox Church as a therapeutic science. We taught all day, every hour, taking it in turns, he the historical aspects of Romanity, I the hesychastic elements of the Orthodox tradition. I regarded it as a great honour that, all the time I was speaking, I had him among my audience for my talks. From that time onwards I became more closely associated with Fr. John. The photograph of the two of us together, which is published in this book, comes from that Seminar.

Later, when I was elected Metropolitan of Nafpaktos, he sent me a request, dated 13th April 1998, asking me to take him onto the roll of the Metropolis.

His request reads as follows:

"Kalamaki 13 April 1998

His Eminence Metropolitan of Nafpaktos and St Vlassios
Hierotheos

Your Eminence,

I should like to express officially my desire to be included on the roll of the Metropolis as a priest.

I have served the Church of Greece since 1970, when I was appointed as a permanent professor of the University of Thessaloniki and relocated from the United States of America to Greece.

I have informed you at our meetings of the reasons why I wish to belong formally to your Metropolis of the Church of Greece.

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22. Ibid. pp. 12-13

I remain at your disposal for anything you may require in order for my transfer to your Metropolis to be completed.

I respectfully kiss your right hand,
Protopresbyter John S. Romanides"

In a document that I sent to Archbishop Spyridon of America I asked for his discharge certificate, which he provided.

My letter read as follows:

"Nafpaktos, 17th June 1998
Protocol No. 222

To: His Eminence
Archbishop of America
Spyridon

Your Eminence,

The very venerable Professor, Protopresbyter Father John Romanides, whom I have known for years, has submitted a request dated 13th April 1998, in which he has asked to be transferred as a priest onto the roll of the Holy Metropolis of Nafpaktos and St Vlassios.

As he mentions in his request, he moved from the United States of America to Greece in 1970 and has resided in Greece for twenty-eight consecutive years, teaching in the Theological School of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki and serving the Church of Greece until now on various official missions. He is certainly not going to return to America.

As I respect the clergyman in question on account of the many services that he has rendered and continues to render to the Church and Orthodox theology, I wish to concede to his request and to take him onto the roll in the Holy Metropolis of which, by the grace of God, I have the pastoral care, in order that he may assist in my work.

The purpose of this letter is to inform Your Eminence of this wish of mine and to request that you do what is necessary on your part.

In the certainty that you will consent to my request, I remain with respect,

† The Metropolitan of Nafpaktos and St Vlassios Hierotheos"

The discharge certificate from the Archdiocese of America reads as follows:

"Protocol No. 173/98

DISCHARGE LETTER

In accordance with the Divine and Sacred Apostolic and Synodical Canons concerning commendatory and discharge letters to be provided for clergy wishing to be transferred,

WE DISCHARGE

from the 1st November 1998 from our Holy Archdiocese the Reverend Priest – whose priesthood is without impediment – John Romanides, who until now was teaching in the Holy Theological School of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki and serving the Church of Greece on various official missions for 28 consecutive years, following canonical leave on secondment from the Holy Clergy of the Holy Archdiocese of America, in order that he may be included canonically among the holy clergy of the Holy Metropolis of Nafpaktos and St Vlassios.

In New York, the 8th October, 1998

† The Archbishop of America Spyridon"

The discharge letter shows that all the time he was in Greece he had "canonical leave on secondment from the Holy Clergy of the Holy Archdiocese of America" and that his "priesthood is without impediment". Thus from October 1998 until the day of his death, 1st November 2001, he belonged to the Clergy of the Holy Metropolis of Nafpaktos and St Vlassios. That provided an opportunity for us to be even more closely in touch.

5. The Philokalic Atmosphere of his Life

His family environment and the Greek Orthodox piety of his parents exercised a major influence on the soul of the young John Romanides from his infancy. Although he lived and studied in the greatest university centres of his time and was taught by eminent Protestant professors, they did not influence him in such a way that he analysed theology rationally. The hesychastic setting in which he had grown up

was much more powerful than those other influences. The starting point for his ascetic teaching was Orthodox hesychasm, which he first encountered in his family environment. It is significant that even in his university lectures he did not often refer to what he had studied in Western institutions of higher learning, even though he knew all the Protestant and Catholic trends which influenced Orthodox theology. The philokalic-neptic-hesychastic tradition of the Orthodox Church had influenced him and literally captivated him.

He also had close ties with ascetic and hesychastic Fathers, so the hesychastic environment in his home, which he inherited, grew stronger within him. The grace of God prepared him over a long period and made good use both of his great intellectual capabilities and the investigative spirit that dominated him. These three factors, his natural intellectual capabilities, the hesychastic environment in which he grew up and his investigative disposition, acquired from studying at universities, formed the strong foundations of his later development.

He grew up in the Protestant surroundings of American universities, where they were doubtful about the tradition of the Fathers, because, as they asserted, the holy Fathers had supposedly altered the spirit of the Gospel from the 4th century onwards. For that reason, using his intelligence, he devoted himself particularly to the so-called Apostolic Fathers of the Church, who were the immediate successors of the Apostles. He wanted to identify the bridge between the apostolic period and the patristic era.

He studied the Apostolic Fathers, who had the same tradition as the holy Apostles, then he progressed to the great Fathers of the 4th century, and later to the hesychast Fathers, such as St Symeon the New Theologian and St Gregory Palamas, and all the neptic Fathers of the Philokalia. By doing this he found that they have the same theology, which was different from the scholastic theology of the West.

Through these studies, he realised that the preservation of the single Orthodox tradition was interrupted in the West by the scholastics, who used the works of Augustine. This tradition was altered by the conquest of the Western part of the Roman Empire by the barbarian Germanic tribes who descended on the West, a change for the worse continued by the Protestants. Fr. John himself remained firmly within the neptic tradition, which he regarded as the foundation of Orthodox theology.

Later on he referred to it as a therapeutic science. He also saw the cultural change made by the Franks who conquered the West. This is the key to the subsequent development of the theory of Romanity. Later he extended its scope even further by analysing the characteristics of the Arabic-speaking Romans of Lebanon, when he taught Orthodox theology there.

The philokalic-hesychastic tradition of the young Fr. John Romanides is clearly apparent in his correspondence with the shipowners, Panagos and Katingo Pateras, who later embraced the monastic life, and with their daughter, Irene. The personality of Fr. John Romanides, then a young man, as well as the philokalic atmosphere that was characteristic of him, are evident from this correspondence, which Fr. George Metallinos has published.

A letter sent by the nun Orthodoxia of the Monastery of the Annunciation in Oinoussai, on behalf of her Abbess Maria to Fr. George Metallinos mentions how Fr. John made the acquaintance of Panagos and Katingo Pateras. When, between 1954 and 1955, Katingo Pateras asked Archbishop Michael of America to recommend a spiritual father so that she could make her confession, he recommended Fr. John, who was then a young priest serving in America. The Archbishop told her: "Do not be influenced by the fact that he is young. He is extremely spiritual and very good." As soon as she met him, she said: "I have seen St Basil the Great!"[23]

Staying in Athens – "the Blessed Community"

When Fr. John came to Athens to prepare his doctoral thesis on the ancestral sin he stayed in the home of the shipowners Panagos and Katingo Pateras and mixed with people who loved the Orthodox hesychastic tradition of the Church.

The letter sent by the nun Orthodoxia of the Monastery of the Annunciation in Oinoussai to Fr. George Metallinos provides some information about his stay in the Pateras' family home in Palaio Psychiko. The late Demetrios Panagopoulos also lived there with his wife and hospitality was frequently offered to Fathers from the Holy Mountain, to Fr. Philotheos Zervakos and Fr. Amphilochios Makris from Patmos.

23. Ibid. p. 78

It really was "a blessed community, a hive of Kollyvades.*" They usually read the works of St Symeon the New Theologian. "They read him together and [Fr. John] expounded his teaching. He spoke to them about the prayer-rope and the Jesus prayer, at a time when the prayer-rope was unknown to most people, especially in the shipowning circle. He completely altered their way of thinking."[24] This probably refers to the fact that Irene, the Pateras' daughter, became a nun, followed later by Panagos, who became a monk, taking the name Xenophon, and Katingo, who became a nun and Abbess of the Monastery, taking the name Maria.

Fr. John Romanides' letters show that, while he was staying in Athens, he was in contact with important figures, including Photis Kontoglou, Costis Bastias and Fr. Augustine Kantiotis. Fr. Hieronymos of Simonopetra, who was living in the Monastery of the Ascension in Vyrona, is also mentioned as someone with whom he was in contact.[25] He also refers to a certain Elder who went to the house to perform a holy water blessing, which probably means Fr. Hieronymos of Simonopetra or Fr. Philotheos Zervakos, as Fr. George Metallinos comments.[26] In another letter he writes about Fr. Philotheos Zervakos, the Abbot of the Monastery of Longovarda, whom he calls "a wondrous Elder", and from whom he receives advice. He writes of him, "The fact is that Fr. Zervakos' words brought us great comfort."[27] He was also in touch with Fr. Hieronymos of Aegina.

Elsewhere he writes that, because he was working on his doctoral thesis, he told his friends not to come to the house, and he did not communicate with them himself. As a result, "They are all complaining that I have abandoned them."[28]

When he returned to America he sent greetings to all these people and envied the spiritual companionship in Athens: "Surely you know how envious we were when we read about the all-night vigil in the

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* **Kollyvades** was the name given to members of an Orthodox Christian renewal movement in the second half of the 18th century. – Translator's note

24. Ibid. pp. 79-80
25. Ibid. pp. 120, 154
26. Ibid. p. 93, n. 21
27. Ibid. pp. 160-61
28. Ibid. p. 92

house in such company." He tells them, however, that they too have found good friends in America: "Fortunately for us, God has sent us, just as we were saying that we were on our own, God has revealed to us, others who have not bowed the knee to Baal."[29] He is referring to Hieromonk Panteleimon, a spiritual child of Elder Joseph the Hesychast, as we shall see below.

He knows about the Jesus prayer and the prayer-rope, so in one letter he writes, "I have Irene's (Panagos and Katingo's daughter's) prayer-rope hanging in front of me on my desk."[30]

Surprises from Greece

When he came to Greece, initially for his doctoral thesis and later to take up the professorial chair at the University of Thessaloniki, he was very surprised by many things. He had grown up differently and encountered a different reality. We shall look at a few points, as he himself recalls them in his spoken addresses.

One of the things that seemed strange to him was the lack of distinction between a historian of philosophy and a philosopher. He said:

> "This distinction between a historian of philosophy and a philosopher is hardly perceptible here in Greece. What I have noticed since coming to Greece is that modern Greeks really love studying people from the past with whom they agree. It seems that modern Greek education applies the concept of the 'good man' and the 'bad man': everyone is either good or bad. If he is good, everything he says is right. And if he is bad, nothing he says is right. It is all wrong."

What worried him in particular was the prevalence of metaphysics, whereas in the West it had been refuted. He said:

> "When I came to Greece I attended a lecture by a professor in the Law School and it came as a surprise to me that he supported a point of view regarding laws that resembled the views of Plato and Aristotle, and is completely contrary to the views that currently prevail. In recent years the belief that an immutable criterion exists

29. Ibid. p. 125
30. Ibid. p. 159

has been utterly condemned. The old metaphysical foundations of the law are no longer acceptable in Europe and America. Positivism prevails today in the Anglo-Saxon world, and in Europe the only philosophy in existence today is existentialism. Nothing else."

"Afterwards I came across some works by professors, at least former professors of philosophy, and I saw there that a distinguished professor of philosophy in Greece was speaking about metaphysics. He had not followed the more recent scientific developments in Europe and America to see why metaphysics had been demolished. In our first meetings I began by describing certain things which were crucial for the course that metaphysics took in Europe."

It was even more surprising that the prevalent Orthodox theology in Greece was mixed up with metaphysics and identified with it. He said:

"I was amazed when I came to Greece and saw professors who had even written books about metaphysics and thought that by so doing they were supporting Orthodoxy, whereas Orthodoxy has no connection whatsoever with metaphysics."

Because he had been born in America, he was very familiar with Papal and Protestant theology, and distinguished it from the Orthodox theology of the Fathers of the Church. When he came to Greece for the first time, he thought that he would encounter the authentic patristic tradition and Orthodox views on various issues. He was therefore profoundly shocked by what he found. He said:

"When I first came to Greece I faced situations that I was unable to understand. So I was forced to become involved with historical issues, apart from issues concerning the history of dogma. It was necessary to study other matters relating to the history, not only of Orthodoxy, but of the Western tradition, because, with the appearance of the modern Greek state, there are certain given facts by official decree of the Greek State."

In 1970 he went to Lebanon to teach as a professor at the Balamand Theological School and met Arabic-speaking Orthodox Christians, who told him that they were Romans. Then in particular he began to study the history of Romanity more intensely.

It also made an impression on him that the subject of dogmatics was separated from ethics at the University.

> "The strange thing is that in practice Orthodox Christians today have separated dogmatics from ethics, or theology from ethics, and have occupied themselves a great deal with moralism and the like. There is a tendency, and I remember very well when I first came to Greece, for some people to work on ethics and others on dogmatics, for instance, and they clearly separate these subjects.
>
> The first time I met someone in a position of authority, a future leader - he had not become a leader then - I drew his attention to the importance of theology, of dogmatics, for the correct functioning of the Church from every point of view. Do you know what he said in reply? 'I must tell you, you know, we do not concern ourselves with dogmatic issues. Only with moral issues.' They do not concern themselves with dogmatic issues!"

He was convinced that sacred relics were the proof that man had attained to glorification* by the grace of God, so that his body had also been sanctified. However, he heard different views from professors of theology. He related:

> "When I first came to Greece I heard some theologians reviling sacred relics and I could not understand what sort of Orthodox they could be. In the West this tradition against sacred relics exists among Protestant and atheist theologians. In the West there are atheists and people with atheistic tendencies who study Christianity. There are university professors like that. There are Jewish theologians who teach Christianity in universities, atheists who teach theology. They teach religion, not to make it believable, but as a subject. So I ask myself: Can purification and illumination exist without sacred relics? Holy relics are the result of illumination. He who reaches the state of illumination reaches the vision of God in the next life, or even in this life. And he leaves sacred relics, which are fragrant, and so on..."

He was unfavourably impressed by the way in which they read and interpreted Holy Scripture in Greece. He said.

> "I remember when I came to Greece they invited me to go to a

* **glorification** = *theosis*. See 'Note by the Author' p. 23 - Translator's note

Bible-reading circle. Someone read them something and they began to say, 'What do you think? What does this text say?' And everyone made his own stupid comments. Just imagine if we had a book on chemistry or surgery and were to read it without having a surgeon or a biologist present, and if they said things without ever having seen a microbe or a cell. That is why the Fathers say that the only one who can interpret Holy Scripture is he who has the same experience as the Apostles and Prophets. Not just anyone."

Because he had studied in America and knew the technique and methodology, as we have seen, and because he knew Orthodox teaching through the writings of the Fathers of the Church, he was surprised by the fanaticism that he encountered in Greece. He said:

"What I have observed is that here in Greece those who have studied theology, political sciences, philology, Greek history, for example, Greek literature, ethnology and so on, not only chant slogans, in my opinion, but are fanatical. They are fanatical and unbending. They do not have the patience to listen to anything that does not accord with what they believe and learnt at school. That is very difficult for Orthodoxy, because later on here, when these attitudes are transferred to religious matters, we have something much worse: the problem of superstition."

When he was preparing his doctoral thesis, he used to visit villages and ask various illiterate people about their views on Paradise and Hell. He said:

"What the layman says here in Greece, that we shall all go to the same place, I don't know how to check it, to see where this saying comes from. I have heard it so many times, from the time when I was a doctoral candidate here in Greece. When I used to go round the villages, any illiterate villager I met would say: 'Son, whatever we do, we'll all go to the same place,' they said. I don't know where this thing originates. Perhaps it comes from an old tradition based on beautiful icons of the Second Coming?"

He visited monks in monasteries and asked about the spiritual life. As he had been taught about noetic prayer, he observed the way in which monks behaved. He once related:

"On one occasion I was coming from Longovarda, from the island of Paros, with my family and night was falling. There was a monk on the ship from Longovarda. When he fell asleep, although before nobody saw anything - you only saw a monk - when he fell asleep he began: 'Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon me.' And not only did he say the Jesus prayer in his sleep, but he said it with his mouth and continuously made the sign of the cross. When he was awake he was surely saying the Jesus prayer, but not with his mouth and hands; he said it only in his heart."

Patristic-Neptic-Hesychastic Tradition

The whole tradition that dominated him from his childhood and youth, but also from his studies, was the patristic teaching and the neptic life of the Orthodox Church. This is clear from all his teaching at the University, as well as from the letters that have been published by Fr. George Metallinos. Here I shall restrict myself to the letters.

Fr. John thanks Panagos and Katingo Pateras for undertaking to publish his doctoral thesis. This pleased him greatly, because in this way they too would contribute "to restoring contemporary Orthodox thinking and praxis to the unadulterated tradition of the holy Martyrs and Fathers of our only true Orthodox faith." He suggests that they should read it in order to understand what they are contributing:

"I want you to read it so that, if you publish it, you will know that you are not printing the work of Fr. John, but the common confession of Orthodox Christians of the first two centuries."[31]

When he came to Greece for his doctoral thesis he realised that many professors at the Theological School had been influenced by Western theology. He was pleased, however, when he ascertained that theological thinking was turning towards the patristic tradition. He writes: "Father Florovsky returned a few days ago [November 1959] from the Feast of St Gregory Palamas in Thessaloniki and he is pleased with the turn that our theology has now taken towards the patristic tradition."[32] He rejoiced at the publication of patristic works. "We are fol-

31. Ibid. pp. 94-95
32. Ibid. p. 149

lowing the publications in Greece with great interest, particularly, of course, the patristic works."[33] He ascribed great importance to the development of healthy monasticism. "Real monasticism must at all costs be strengthened and grow spiritually in teaching and leadership. Otherwise we are running a great risk."[34]

In the letters he writes from America he mentions Fr. Panteleimon, a disciple of Elder Joseph the Hesychast. He learns about the life of Elder Joseph from him and no doubt he receives further training in the practical method of noetic prayer.

He writes about him in a letter:

> God "has sent us a monk from the Holy Mountain, a young man, born in America, who went to the Mountain and found a certain Elder Joseph, who happens to be one of the holiest hermits on the Mountain. He stayed with him for quite a long time."[35]

Elder Joseph the Hesychast sent letters from the Holy Mountain to Panteleimon and they read them together. He makes a characteristic comment:

> "He [Panteleimon] has as his Elder a certain Joseph, who has eight excellent disciples. Joseph himself is perhaps the best ascetic in noetic prayer. We read his letters together. What can I say? Elder Joseph recommends the *Pilgrim* to beginners as a guide, if they do not find an Elder."[36]

He also refers to Fr. Ephraim, Elder Joseph's disciple and later Abbot of the Monastery of Philotheou, who is now in America and who was known to Panagos and Katingo Pateras.[37] Fr. Panteleimon and the work he is undertaking in America are frequently mentioned.[38]

The philokalic tradition is of great interest to him. He writes:

> "We have spent two days together [with Hieromonk Panteleimon] in a spiritual gathering of about 30 students from universities in

33. Ibid. p. 164
34. Ibid. p. 164
35. Ibid. p. 125-26
36. Ibid. p. 134
37. Ibid. pp. 150, 151
38. Ibid. pp. 151-52, 155-56

the area, in a deserted place like a monastery. He, Fr. Florovsky, another priest and I spoke. The main subject was prayer. We expounded the Philokalia and its preconditions. It went very well."

Fr. Panteleimon also gave him holy relics from eight saints.[39]

Because he knew that in order to enter the life of noetic prayer a particular place is needed where someone can practise asceticism, he was interested in the establishment of a monastery in America. A Church without a holy monastery is not Orthodox. He writes about the secularised state that prevailed in America: "The state of our Church here is almost that of a dead man's last breath."[40] He hopes that a monastery will be founded following the typikon of the Holy Mountain:

> "Where sin abounds, there, by the grace of God, grace can abound much more. A good and austere monastic life is the only thing that can show us the way out of the miserable state of Orthodoxy in America. If it is undertaken by monks of the Holy Mountain, we shall have the typikon of the Holy Mountain, with vigil services and so on, and they will be a strong missionary centre, that will invade the centre of Satan's kingdom and cleanse the atmosphere of demons with incense and spiritual vigilance. You know that the ascetics did not flee into the desert because they were searching for a quiet life, but because the desert was regarded as the supreme kingdom of Satan. That is why Christ went into the desert first and conquered the devil in his strongest fortress. So here, where for so many years Satan has ruled unopposed, he must be fought."[41]

He denounces the activity in the Church of 'pseudo-monks', who fight the monastic life.[42] He tells them, however, that a "spiritual daughter of Joseph...has managed to purchase a monastery, so at last there is a monastery in America."[43]

He regrets his decision to leave Greece after working on his doctoral thesis and return to America. He writes:

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39. Ibid. pp. 126-28
40. Ibid. p. 150
41. Ibid. pp. 135-36
42. Ibid. pp. 136, 155-56
43. Ibid. p. 150

"In spite of all the trials surrounding our departure, we were very sorry to leave the sacred ground of Orthodoxy and now we are reflecting on the idiocies of America. May God grant us patience until we return to Greece."[44]

He loves the monastic hesychastic and neptic tradition and feels an obligation to make it known in America. He regards this as his task and mission. In one of his letters he writes:

"I should very much like to come to Greece and I told Panteleimon to make the relevant inquiries. On the other hand, perhaps God would regard me as a deserter if I abandoned the battle here. In any case, we shall see."[45]

Elsewhere he writes:

"We have often said that we shall gather our things together and come to Greece. Only the thought that we ought to do our duty here holds us back."[46]

In another letter he writes:

"We should not fear people outside as much as those inside. In any case, as long as we can do something here, we will do it. Otherwise we are ready to leave. Please do not think that we are stuck here, but also not that we would desert the battlefield for the sake of peace and quiet. If that were the case, we would have left long ago."[47]

He is profoundly conscious that he ought to help the Church in America. This was also linked with founding an Orthodox monastery. He writes, "The Orthodox here are in great need of a good monastery."[48] His desire to help the Church in America preoccupies him. He writes:

"The other thing that prevents me [from leaving America and returning to Greece] is the question of whether the captain on his own

44. Ibid. p. 95-96
45. Ibid. p. 153
46. Ibid. p. 163
47. Ibid. p. 164-65
48. Ibid. p. 161

can desert a sinking ship, leaving the crew to perish. If we two or three leave, who will fight the battle here? Is the crown of victory given to a deserter? Or is he shot as a coward?" [49]

He is literally tormented by this question, so he continues:

"A layman can seek his own salvation only, but the priest must first attend to the salvation of others, because he will only be saved together with his flock, not without them. These matters in general torment me. If you wish, discuss them with the spiritual fathers there, because I should very much like to be wrong on this issue." [50]

He writes in another letter, however: "Father Zervakos writes that we should all get up and come to Greece." [51] Eventually he came to Greece when he was elected professor of dogmatics at the Theological School in Thessaloniki.[52]

Pastoral Theology

He is a priest, but he is also very familiar with Orthodox teaching, so his words are theological. He speaks about faith in God and patience and sends very spiritual greetings and exhortations. What concerns him is the salvation and glorification of the recipients of his letters, as can be clearly discerned. We shall quote some typical phrases that express the theology of the Church by which he was inspired.

"I pray that you may all return in perfect health, zealous to play your part in upholding the tradition, now that you see where abandoning it leads." [53]

"I pray that God may grant you health and strength to cope with all your trials. May Panagos and Irene's tests turn out well, and do not forget what Paul says: 'When I am weak, then I am strong.'" [54]

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49. Ibid. p. 143
50. Ibid. p. 143
51. Ibid. p. 161
52. Ibid. p. 182
53. Ibid. p. 93
54. Ibid. p. 103

"May God keep you always and grant you strength to trample on the enemy. May the grace of the Spirit remain with you always."[55]

"We pray that the grace of the incarnate Son of God may keep you always and shine in your heart through the Holy Spirit and bear fruit through the whole of the new year and for ever and ever. Amen."[56]

"We all wish you a happy Easter and a blessed Resurrection. May we all reach the Day of Pentecost illuminated and All Saints' Day sanctified."[57]

"We all wish Katingo many happy returns and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. May every child and grandchild be a little light in the home."[58]

All these greetings that he sends are theological. They are about how to experience the grace of God and live through the feasts of our Church. Instead of an outward celebration there is a spiritual and personal participation in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

When giving spiritual guidance to Panagos Pateras, who had already become a monk and taken the name Fr. Xenophon, he wanted to convey an awareness of continuous spiritual ascents, since the spiritual life is not static but continuous movement and ascent. He writes:

"But God loves him very much and has taught him a lot. He will teach him even more that he is not fully aware of now. We must not stand still. With each of God's seasons we must learn the next steps, because perfection consists in progressing to what is above nature. On the other hand, progress will be according to our strength."[59]

The method of spiritual guidance that he exercises as a spiritual father and the combination of spiritual fatherhood with the theology of the Church come to light especially in the way that he deals with the illness of the nun Irene and consoles her parents after her death.

It is worth noting that when Fr. John wrote these letters, from the

55. Ibid. p. 107
56. Ibid. p. 132
57. Ibid. p. 141
58. Ibid. p. 151
59. Ibid. p. 171

beginning of Irene's illness until she passed away, he was between thirty and thirty-two years old! This shows his spiritual and theological maturity at that age.[60]

When he was informed of Irene's illness, he recommended patience to her parents, absolute trust in God and prayer, because in this way Satan is defeated:

> "I pray that God may grant that Irene may get better. Great patience and absolute trust in God is needed, because He knows what He is doing. If we have real faith and our prayer is the prayer of faith and love, our God gives us the power to overcome Satan."[61]

The temporary improvement in her health delights him. He suggests that she should search out Vladimir Lossky's book, *Essai sur la Théologie Mystique de l'Église d'Orient*, in Switzerland, however difficult it is to find. It is an important book because through it theologians "can learn about the theology of the Fathers of our Church in a little more depth." It is "a good introduction to the secret theology and life of our Church, written mainly for people in the West, who do not understand the spirit of Orthodoxy." He knows that she may find it difficult to read, but if she tries she will be able to grasp the meaning. This book "is mainly based on the neptic Fathers of the East and is deeply within the spirit of the Philokalia."[62]

The progress of Irene's illness makes him recommend to her the Jesus prayer which acts in the heart. He also urges her to be spiritually vigilant:

> "We were very sorry to hear that Irene is seriously ill. She should not stop the Jesus prayer and the prayer-rope even for a moment. This prayer is a great weapon and God's energy always prevails in man's heart, provided that he wants it and his mind is not dispersed among the vain things of this world. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."[63]

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60. Sources of information about Irene's life, illness, monastic profession as the nun Irene Myrtidiotissa and decease include the book *The Holy Monastery of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, Oinoussai Chios*, published 1988
61. Fr. G. Metallinos op. cit. p. 99
62. Ibid. p. 124-25
63. Ibid. p. 140

The worsening of Irene's illness prompts him to offer her pastoral and theological guidance in a letter. He speaks about the help that comes from God, the Most Holy Virgin and the saints, His friends; about the benefits that come from our trials; about absolute trust in Christ; about praying with the prayer-rope; and about bearing the cross. I set out below the greater part of the letter on account of its significance.

"We are very distressed about the health of our beloved Irene. Now that we too have a daughter, perhaps we have a better understanding of the pain that parents feel for their children. We ought always to place our hope in the Father of our Saviour, as well as in His All-Holy Mother and all the Saints, whom God hears as His friends. For love of his people, Moses quarrelled with God and through his prayer he saved that stubborn nation from certain destruction. As God heard His friend Moses, how much more will He listen to the prayers of the All-Holy Virgin for us. The Mother of Christ and the Saints pray for our salvation and everything that contributes to it. God is good and always does what is good for us, that our love may be perfected. Being tested is regarded as something bad only by those who are self-seeking, who have loved the world and minister to its desires. Wrath from heaven is revealed to them. He who really loves God faces trials with the power of the Holy Spirit and instead of being diminished he increases. The more he is tried, the more ardent he becomes and fire is kindled within his heart, and once his heart is aflame with the fire of the divinity, the devil departs, no longer having a part in it. The man becomes light and shines like light, and the darkness departs from within him. For those who love God, all things work together for good, particularly our sufferings. Woe to us, if we do not understand that whatever happens, happens for our good. May God do something, so that Irene may get better and we may wake up. Almighty God is in every breath we take, but He is also all-knowing and knows what is best for us. Let us always say: 'Your will be done.' But let us beseech the Mother of God, the friends of Christ and Christ to intervene. Dear Irene, have your prayer-rope in your hand all the time, the Jesus prayer in your mouth and your nous in the prayer. Never have any doubt about God's love. Through the grace that God al-

ways gives when we ask for it, our cross becomes a weapon against the devil. The devil greatly fears the cross, not just the Cross of the Lord but everyone's cross, because he is destroyed by it, whereas through it man is made perfect. God has those who carry the cross as His friends, because their love goes beyond worldly love, which always seeks its own interests."[64]

Fr. John is pleased that Irene has visited a monastery at this difficult time in her life:

"We were pleased that Irene went to the monastery for a while. Perhaps, or rather, certainly she will derive benefit from such a place, as is fitting."[65]

The illness continues and he writes to her personally. He does not console her hypocritically, but he attempts to instil in her absolute trust in God's love. He stresses to her the value of being tested in order that we may participate in the glory of God, and reminds her discreetly of the need to pray using the name of the Lord:

"We are very sorry, Irene, about your continuing illness. Always remember Job's patience and that, however things may seem, we are all in the hands of God. He has the same purpose for each one of us, our salvation and love, but acts differently towards each one, according to our spiritual needs. Whatever happens, however, we must always bear in mind that God loves us so much that He gave His only begotten Son into the hands of lawless men. Man's love for God is perfected through sufferings and without being tried man cannot become a partaker of the glory of God. I believe that you always have the name of the Lord on your lips and I imagine that Father Panteleimon has helped you a lot in this respect. Listen to everything he says and you will gain your soul."[66]

After Irene's death he consoles her parents, brother and sister in an Orthodox spirit, aware of patristic teaching. He mentions sadness and joy, and speaks wisely about those who regretted her death because, in their view, she did not live long enough to enjoy small pleasures:

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64. Ibid. pp. 147-49
65. Ibid. p. 151
66. Ibid. p. 154-55

"Because we are people with a worldly spirit, we were very sorry when we heard that your best child is no longer with us. On the other hand, we rejoiced spiritually because her severe torments were over and she is with Christ and the All-Holy Virgin and the Saints, as she left prepared and supremely well tested by fire, as is fitting only for a specially chosen child of God. God loved her and kept her from the vanity of this age. May God pity those who were sorry because she did not taste the trivial joys of this world, as she was granted the gift of tasting the joy that man is absolutely incapable of understanding in this life."[67]

In the same letter he tells them that Fr. Philotheos Zervakos' letter brought him great joy: "Just yesterday I received from dear Panteleimon the letter from the wondrous Elder, Father Zervakos, which transformed our distress into joy."[68] The letter from Fr. Philotheos Zervakos began as follows: "I announce the joyful news to you, that your dear spiritual sister, the nun Irene Myrtidiotissa, our dear spiritual child, has fallen asleep in the Lord."[69]

Fr. John also expresses, in the same letter to Irene's parents, his joy at her salvation and the boldness that she has received from God:

"Where she is she will pray for us. It is no small thing that Irene should love us so much, now that she surely has boldness before God. Panteleimon described to me the progress that the nun Irene had made, and my heart greatly rejoiced, because she surpassed us all. Diamantis and Kalliopi will have a lot to answer for to God if they do not stand firm, as their sister did."[70]

He finishes with a patristic pastoral message:

"Let us all strive to prepare ourselves so that our own departure may be as joyful. Woe betide us if this is not so. May God protect us all, as He protected our dear Irene."[71]

Fr. John was a great dogmatic theologian, but also a traditional

67. Ibid. p. 160
68. Ibid. p. 160
69. Ibid. p. 162
70. Ibid. p. 161
71. Ibid. p. 162

spiritual father, who exercised his pastoral ministry by theologising and theologised while shepherding those who were striving for the salvation of their souls.

Finally, as is clear from his letters but also from his spoken words, Fr. John not only had an academic and investigative disposition, but also had, to some degree, various spiritual experiences within the hesychastic tradition. I am not in a position to determine the extent of his spiritual experiences, but anyone who reads his spiritual teaching referred to in the following chapters will sense an air of experience. Such teachings are not formulated solely through study and academic research work, if the writer has no experience.

To be sure, Fr. John Romanides, "being clothed in flesh and dwelling in the world," was not a stranger to the influences of the devil. It could even be said that he was attacked by the devil more than anyone else because, as St John of Sinai says, "He who writes about hesychia stirs up demons against himself." In all his writings and his lectures he inveighed against the devil, who is at the core of sin. He also recommended the therapeutic and hesychastic method, which aims to cure man of passions.

The devil's warfare against him was obvious in every phase of his life, from the time when he was writing his thesis until his retirement from the Theological School of the University of Thessaloniki. It affected him on every level: in his personal, family and academic life. There were times when he suffered harm on account of the work he did.

However, what is most significant is not the minor mistakes we make on account of our fallen nature, of which we repent, but the manner in which we face difficult circumstances in our lives. Fr. John Romanides accepted everything that happened, the unjust slanders and the deceitful criticism, almost always in silence and with prayer, in spite of the distress that they caused him. Only very rarely did he react forcefully.

Some people interpreted his silence as a withdrawal from theological and ecclesiastical affairs. But perhaps his choice to react in this way was a result of the neptic-hesychastic tradition in which he lived, which he taught and in which he died. I believe that God will see his contribution to the Church and theological writing, and will value the philokalic and hesychastic way in which he faced the trials that beset

him in his life. His theological message is significant, but so is his hesychastic silence.

6. Communication with the Holy Mountain

Fr. John grew up and studied in America and knew both forms of Western theology, scholastic and moralistic. He chose *The Ancestral Sin* as the subject of his thesis, and in it he expounded the Orthodox teaching of the early centuries of the Church on sin, death and salvation. He began preparing this subject while still in America.

When he came to Greece, and particularly when he submitted his doctoral thesis to the Theological School in Athens, he encountered reactions to his Orthodox views. This raised serious questions for him. He had not expected to encounter elements of the scholastic theology of Thomas Aquinas in Greece among Orthodox theologians. It troubled him greatly.

In the midst of this trial he visited the Holy Mountain to discuss the matter from the point of view of the Orthodox Church's neptic teaching, mainly with the monk Fr. Theoklitos of Dionysiou, who was then the predominant figure on Mount Athos. It was Easter 1957.

The following year, 1958, he sent a letter to Fr. Theoklitos of Dionysiou. It is an important letter because it contains his Orthodox views and shows that he is interested in a form of Christianity and monasticism that fight against eudemonism and Satan. It should be noted that Fr. John was 31 years old at that time. I cite the letter in full:

> Dear Brother in Christ, Monk Theoklitos,
>
> I pray that my letter may find you and our beloved Elder Gabriel in good physical and spiritual health and everything in the Monastery completely in order. I am very sorry that we shall not celebrate Easter together this year. My thoughts are always on the Holy Mountain and whenever the opportunity arises I try to enlighten my acquaintances about it. It is my firm belief that the revival of Orthodoxy will only come about through the restoration of our monastic life. It is precisely because the Church in the world has been cut off from the monastic tradition that the familiar decline in the spiritual life has been observed in our days. Satan has so distorted

the theology of the heretics and the so-called Orthodox who are influenced by the West, that some think that salvation is not from the power and hands of the enemy, but from God. God became man in order to save us from Himself! This is why the ascetic life has disappeared in the West. They neither fast nor pray much. They simply pursue eudemonism. The decline in our monastic life is not due, as some people think, to a lack of dedicated young people. There are many young people who dedicate themselves to the Church. However, because they have a distorted perception of salvation, predestination and sin, instead of going to the Monasteries, they go to *Zoe*[*], or they become monks living in the world, that is to say, secular archimandrites, and unfortunately nowadays the bishops come from among them. When there is mistaken theology, Christianity is reduced to activity. Because of our contemporary theologians' theology of the Church, the only sign that Orthodoxy has not died is 'Greek Christian culture' and the activity of *Zoe*. *Zoe* is necessary on account of the theology concerning the Church of those theologians with tendencies towards the West. For them, the lack of *Zoe* is a sign that Orthodoxy has completely expired. Now *Zoe* has already begun to gain ground here in America and it will bear fruit, because the whole of life here is activity in the world and nothing more. The monastic life of the non-Orthodox here consists of extremely active orders, who engage in anything except spiritual asceticism as the Orthodox tradition understands it. The *Zoe* movement fits excellently into this mould. Unfortunately we do not have a single ascetic or Monastery here and there is no living example of the Orthodox life. The *Zoe* type of piety is so similar to the piety of the non-Orthodox that it will cause havoc if it takes root. I should like to know your opinion concerning the possibilities of transplanting a monastic community of 5 to 10 monks into American territory. If such a thing cannot be done, Orthodoxy will disappear here, or will be transformed into something else, as has already happened to a great extent. I have tried in my book to say the same as you say in yours, but nobody understands here. The Greeks here, you see, have adapted to the eudemonism of the West and in their eyes the

[*] *Zoē*, 'Life', - a home missionary movement founded in Greece at the beginning of the 20th century - Translator's note

pursuit of eudemonism is God's will. So why would anyone want to go up on the rocks and do all night vigils and the like? I should be very pleased if we could correspond. I think that the devil will be sorry that we do not like the Christianity that he promotes, but what can we do? No one can please him when he wants to please God. St Symeon the New Theologian gives an excellent description of how Satan helps certain people in their prayer and good works.

With love in Christ

† J. Romanides"[72]

The monk Fr. Theoklitos of blessed memory writes in his introduction to this letter,

"This article in the Orthodox periodical *Library of the Holy Mountain* will concern a very comprehensive letter from America from an Orthodox theologian, which, in view of its particular interest from the Orthodox point of view, we publish unedited."[73]

Commenting on this letter at the beginning, Fr. Theoklitos says of Fr. John:

"My good friend and most devout priest, J. Romanides, is no ordinary theologian. He learnt Orthodoxy at two or three universities and with the help of asceticism that illumines the soul. With a mastery of four languages and a very solid academic background, he waged a real battle recently with professors of the University of Athens in the field of Orthodox theology, in order to receive his doctorate with his erudite theological book entitled *The Ancestral Sin*.

He is literally a monk, nourished by the holy Fathers and with the holy liturgical life of the Orthodox Church, praising God 'seven times a day'. His complaint is that in our time the monastic life is overlooked by our Orthodox people and systematically attacked by the contemporary attitude of the theologians, particularly those belonging to the organisation *Zoe*, resulting in a fatal decline in the

72. Monk Theoklitos of Dionysiou, *Athonika Anthi*, Vol. 1, Astir publications, pp. 118-19. Fr. Theoklitos himself published this letter in the Orthodox periodical *Ayioritiki Vivliothiki*, in an article entitled 'Orthodox messages from the new world' – in Greek

73. Ibid. p. 118

life of Orthodoxy. In other words, exactly what our throat is hoarse with shouting from this column for years."[74]

Elsewhere in his article Fr. Theoklitos writes,

"We shall not comment here on the devout priest's opinion, upon which his book is almost completely based, that '...some think that salvation is not from the power and hands of the enemy, but from God!' The examination of this very serious subject goes beyond the bounds of this present article. We believe, however, that his opinion expresses Orthodox truth."[75]

After various comments Fr. Theoklitos brings his article to a close by addressing the following words to Fr. John:

"Dear priest! Let us pray, let us pray, let us pray. Orthodoxy has never been as severely tried as it is today. Only a higher power can check the progress of evil clothed in the garment of piety. Only the Lord can 'tear up your sackcloth' and clothe you with gladness."[76]

This testimony regarding Fr. John Romanides given by Fr. Theoklitos of Dionysiou, a leading monk of the Holy Mountain in our era, is significant.

7. Various Autobiographical Details

It is clear from everything already written and all that is still to come in this book, in which Fr. John's spoken teaching will be heard, that he did more than simply combine his academic post with the Church's hesychastic tradition. When he became Professor of Dogmatics at the Theological School in Thessaloniki, he brought to the academic chair the experience of the Fathers of the Church, which he knew from his family environment, from renowned teachers and spiritual fathers, and which he had also personally experienced through his individual quest, in his studies and in the life of the Church. In this way he perceived the great significance of the neptic-philokalic tradition of the Church and how it related to dogma. That is why he often spoke categorically and decisively.

74. Ibid. pp. 119-20
75. Ibid. p. 121
76. Ibid. p. 123

When he became aware of the theological reality in Greece, which had been influenced by German, French and Russian theology, he was deeply shocked. He devoted himself with missionary zeal to passing on the neptic tradition, but people could not bear the authenticity of his teaching. Various religious, Christian and Church circles in Greece reacted against the theology that he preached, which is the theology of the Orthodox Church at its deepest core. There is no doubt that envy, which develops and flourishes in all such circumstances, must also be taken into account here. The reader will perceive this from reading the analysis in the following chapters of this book.

At this point a few autobiographical details from his lectures will be quoted. They show his character, his personality, his teaching and his activity.

He spoke at length in his lectures and discussions and was very analytical. In one discussion he began at 6.30 and went on past 8.30. He was very inspired. I record a dialogue.

"What time did we start? At 6.00?

- We began at 6.30.

- And what time should we finish?

- Two hours. 8.30, that is to say 8.00, if anyone wants to leave, up until 8.30.

- So we are all right. It's 8.30.

- Fine, we are fine."

The basic subject was the patristic tradition and its content, which is hesychasm. He said:

> "The problem that I posed here in the first lessons is, 'What is patristic theology and what are the characteristic features of this theology?', so that someone can have a criterion with which to judge and decide when patristic theology ends."

There was a discussion as to which Greek word we should use for 'experience' in matters of the spiritual life: *vioma* or *peira**. Fr. John

* *Vioma* is linked with the verb 'to live' in the sense of 'living through something'. Fr. John links *peira* with the verb *pascho,* 'to suffer or undergo', and stresses the passive aspect of experiencing the energy of God. - Translator's note

insisted on using patristic terms and, in this particular case, on the terminology of St Symeon the New Theologian, whom he had studied. He said:

> "I am not sure, I have not dealt with this subject. I happened to notice in Symeon the New Theologian that the term most often used, the term that appears everywhere for 'experience' is *peira*, the concept of undergoing something. I undergo glorification: experience-*peira*. These concepts are widespread. 'I touch', the sense of touch, knowledge, all the biological senses, the sense of smell and so on."

He compared contemporary theologians on the basis of the Fathers of the Church. He was particularly interested in how Western theology came to Greece and was being taught in the University. He spoke about the 'microbe' that was getting into the theology of the Theology Schools. He taught:

> "When we take Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain and read him and afterwards we read Zikos Rhossis, we see the distance between them. Where did Zikos Rhossis find all those things? We must find the sources. Where will we find them? Of course, for Zikos Rhossis we shall find them in Germany. Wherever someone studied.
>
> There are theologians in Greece today, who, if you were to do this sort of study on their writings, you would see that the theology of Karl Barth is getting into Orthodox theology. It is not Orthodox theology. These are Karl Barth's opinions.
>
> Anyone who has read Karl Barth can make an immediate diagnosis and see where the illness comes from, where he caught this disease, where he picked up the microbe. This microbe did not exist in Greece. Who knew about Karl Barth? There is someone who studied with Karl Barth for a few years and is now a professor in Greece, and knows nothing else.
>
> Afterwards one can look at who studied in Russia, what he studied in Russia, what he brought back from Russia, and how much of all this Russian teaching is patristic. How does it relate? All these things need analysing. For that reason we must be careful. We must read and see who has been influenced by the Russians and who by the Germans, in what respect he has influenced, why, how, and so on.

Then there is the issue of evaluation. Has he been influenced for the good or for the bad, because perhaps it has had a good influence on him. Perhaps on particular issues things are not as they should be for the Orthodox and we should correct them, and in certain respects it may be good for us to imitate the others. But why is something not right and why should we imitate the others?"

Apart from classes at the Theological School, where he also attracted many students from other Faculties of the University, he was involved in all the pan-Orthodox meetings and dialogues with other Confessions. He represented the Church of Greece at many meetings. He said:

"Originally a hundred subjects had been put forward for the Great Council for which certain Orthodox of the Ecumenical Patriarchate were making preparations. When we had the preliminary consultation to prepare for the Great Council, I was among the representatives of the Church of Greece. We made an effort and reduced the number from a hundred to ten! To me, at least, even ten subjects are too many, because I am rather doubtful about whether this Great Council ought to be convened."

He represented the Church of Greece in the dialogue with the Anglicans and attempted to introduce them to the hesychastic tradition and noetic prayer. In one of his talks he said:

"In the dialogue with the Anglicans an effort was made, by myself at least, and I came under attack much more from the Orthodox, at least at first, than from the Anglicans, who were actually enthusiastic about what we told them. It was the Orthodox who raised objections. Finally, the year before last, we reached a fairly advanced stage in our agreements with the Anglicans. One part of these agreements concerned Orthodox anthropology and noetic prayer. They have isolated that part nowadays and given it to the monks, so that they can deal with these issues.

The result was that, with the interpretative keys that had been given to the Anglicans, a strange thing happened in the summer of 1982 with an Anglican bishop, a professor in Manchester. He has published the complete works of St Patrick, who was the missionary

of the Irish. When we were preparing the text of the agreement, he searched through those texts and found a wonderful passage by St Patrick about noetic prayer. I had presented passages from St Cassian and some extracts from St Gregory of Tours. But of course they are English. They live on an island and think, 'What has all this to do with us?' Thus noetic prayer has become the backbone of the 'Anglican-Orthodox dialogue'. The same is beginning to happen with the Lutherans as well."

In these dialogues, however, he sometimes had problems caused by the representatives of Orthodox Churches, who were under the influence of Western theology. He describes such a case:

"Two years ago we held a dialogue with the Anglicans. A subject was raised. We were divided into three committees. We used to work and then gather in a plenary session, after working separately in three committees. Every time that we met together, the three committees issued minutes.

On one occasion I saw in the minutes of a sub-committee that our own people, together with an Anglican theologian, supported a statement that Holy Scripture is the revelation and word of God. I wrote a short memorandum to the Synod of the Church of Greece and officially asked permission, so as not to get into trouble with anyone, to support, in the dialogue with the Anglicans, my view that Holy Scripture is neither the revelation nor the word of God, but is about the revelation and about the Word of God.

Well, on the basis of this distinction, we had a meeting in Moscow, where I now stated it openly. I was even ready to produce the document, if I encountered any obstacles from the Orthodox. But there was no need, because our people became disorientated when they heard me saying these things. They were afraid that perhaps I knew something and they might be put to shame in front of foreigners, so they did not open their mouths. The documents were written and everywhere the idea was erased that Holy Scripture is the revelation or the word of God."

He drew his arguments from modern science as well as from the neptic tradition.

"In biology we also see the development of epistemology. We now have biological epistemology. Biological phenomena are now explained biologically, as cells have DNA and cellular memory. On one occasion we discussed these matters with the Anglicans. They were alarmed. How is it possible to reduce man's knowledge to electrical energies etc? What will become of our faith in God? I replied that that is their problem. We, as Orthodox, have no problem with this biological explanation of epistemology."

In his talks he often shared his numerous experiences from the various conferences he had attended. We refer to a few such experiences as follows:

"In a conference here, someone stood up and said that Arius was a holy man. Because he did not know what sanctity was. Other people here were present and they heard him with their own ears. Arius was a saint! What did he mean? He meant that Arius was a good man."

"Years ago, we had a conference at the University of Notre Dame in America. They had invited a hundred people to discuss the results of the Second Vatican Council. Certain theologians gave papers there. One actually presented a paper on the hellenisation of patristic theology. He stressed how necessary it was for the hellenisation of patristic theology to be discarded, for us to return once more to the Jewish modes of thought and distance ourselves from this Greek influence. He referred to this as the main concern of contemporary theology. I asked to speak, and I explained that this interest of theologians in purifying Christian theology of the very powerful influence of Greek philosophy, is a prevalent trend since the last century. It presupposes, however, that we read the Fathers of the Church wearing Augustine's spectacles, because it is a fact that Augustine was influenced by the Greek philosophers and by Neoplatonism."

"I was in Thailand the year before last. There was a UNESCO conference on the rights of man and one of those attending – there was a small team dealing with this subject – was the Vice Chancellor of an Indian university, and a professor of philosophy. I had given him something in English that I had written about Romanity

etc. He read it and we often went outside. After discussing the issues, he was very interested in the way in which the history of philosophy is taught in the West. The history of philosophy, as Europeans understand it, is completely different from the same subject as perceived by an Indian."

Because he spoke English fluently and French well, and communicated with many people all over the world, and on account of his great love for the Orthodox tradition, he was constantly having discussions about Orthodox issues. I quote below some references from his talks:

"At the moment I have a problem with a foreign Orthodox Christian, because I have written quite a long study on these matters to attract the Protestants. The Protestants regard charismatic Christianity as very important. When they hear about these things they are filled with enthusiasm. They do not consider the rank of bishop and the tradition of the Church to be significant. This is the only issue they regard as important, because they revolted against a feudal Church. We do not have the same problem. We went through such crises. But since we have declared Symeon the New Theologian to be one of the greatest saints of our Church, the bishop, even if he is not charismatic himself, is obliged to support this charismatic Christianity of noetic prayer. We are officially committed to this tradition, even if we do not always have it in practice."

"I went to a baptism in an aristocratic family in England. The present Archbishop of Canterbury took us with him to a baptism that a team was going to perform. There was a large reception. The father of the girl must be one of the most important astronomers in England. We had a discussion in the lounge. And he, poor man, had suffered a phobia about what the future of the world would be."

The way he talked to people, wherever he was, is clear from an amusing case of a discussion with a Jehovah's Witness and an Orthodox Christian.

"I was somewhere and I heard two people talking between themselves, without them knowing who I was. How were they to know who I was? They were discussing between themselves. One was talking about priests and bishops, insulting them. The other was

supporting them. I understood: one must be a Jehovah's Witness and the other Orthodox, a pious Orthodox Christian, and they were having a discussion. I was trying to find change. I wanted to take the bus and I did not have any change. So I said, 'Can I trouble you theologians? Perhaps one of you can change ten drachmas for me?'

I called them theologians and they exploded. One was a plumber and the other a dustman, and they were discussing theology, so I called them theologians.

- But we aren't theologians.
- Well, as you are both speaking so wisely, I said.

Afterwards I told them:

- Where I come from, do you know what a theologian is?
- What is a theologian? he asked me, Where are you from?
- I'm from Cappadocia.
- Ah! Cappadocia, they said.
- Someone who sees God is a theologian.

The Jehovah's Witness, I think it was, jumped up.

- But I see God too.
- Come on now, I said, How can you see God! Where have you see God?
- I see him everywhere. God is the clouds. He is the stones. He is the sea. He is...

I took the change and left. What can you do?"

In this incident we see all the characteristics of Fr. John Romanides. Firstly, he never lets an opportunity go to waste. Secondly, his discussions were always theological. Thirdly, he was courteous in discussion, with a subtle sense humour. Finally, when he realised that the other man was categorical, fanatical and his head, as he put it, was 'cement', he discreetly withdrew.

In general, Orthodox theology, combined with history, was the dominant factor in his life. It moves me to remember that once, when he had been admitted to the intensive care unit and I visited him, although he was attached to various tubes, when I asked him about his health and what the doctors said about his heart, he replied, "This heart does not concern me, other matters concern me." And he spoke to me about theological and ecclesiastical issues. I wondered how it was pos-

sible, with death lying in wait, for him to be interested in theological matters and to be indifferent about death.

I was given the answer when I reread his doctoral thesis *The Ancestral Sin*. In that book he analyses the issues that relate to the sin of the forefathers, death that entered the world as a consequence of sin, and everything concerning the deliverance from the power of death. Then, as a conclusion to the whole work, he uses a passage from St John Chrysostom:

> "Since he that is not afraid of death is out of reach of the devil's tyranny...He fears no one, he is in terror of no one, he is higher than all, and more free than all... Let us not then prove false to the gift bestowed on us. *'For we,'* it says, *'have received not a spirit of fear, but the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.'* Let us stand then courageously, laughing death to scorn."

Fr. John was courageous in his theology and his death. Besides, he had written in a letter years before, as we have mentioned:

> "Let us all strive to prepare ourselves so that our own departure may be as joyful. Woe betide us if this is not so. May God protect us all, as He protected our dear Irene."

8. Fr. John as a Teacher of Dogmatics

Fr. John Romanides' important thesis, *The Ancestral Sin*, signalled the beginning of many developments in Orthodox theology in Greece. Apart from that, he wrote various specific texts on dogmatic subjects, which analyse significant aspects of the dogmatic teaching of the Church.

When he was elected as Professor of Dogmatics at the Theological School of Thessaloniki and began his university lectures, early in 1972, *Student Notes in Dogmatics, according to the Lectures of Professor John Romanides* were circulated, edited by John Kongoulis, then a student and later professor and Dean of the Theological School of Thessaloniki. These dogmatic notes briefly analyse the subjects: 'God and the World', 'Trinitarian Dogma' and 'Ecclesiology'[77].

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77. *Fititikai simiosis kata tas paradosis tou Kathigitou p. I. Romanidou*, edited I. B. Kongoulis, Thessaloniki, 1972 - in Greek

These *Student Notes* were later translated into English by Protopresbyter Fr. George Dragas, Professor of Patristics at Holy Cross School of Theology, Boston, and published with the original Greek text and the English translation in 2004 for the use of the students of Holy Cross School of Theology. The bilingual title of this publication is: *An Outline of Orthodox Patristic Dogmatics, Epitomos Orthodoxos Pateriki Dogmatiki.* The contents have been divided into four parts: 'God and the World', 'The Holy Trinity', 'Christology' and 'Ecclesiology'. The section on 'Ecclesiology' discusses the 'Holy Tradition', 'Christian Perfection' and 'The Last Things'. Anyone reading this text ascertains the basic dogmatic views of Fr. John Romanides, which is why it is described as an *Outline of Orthodox Patristic Dogmatics*[78].

His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios of Boston writes a Foreword to the work setting out his thoughts as follows:

> "Originally appearing in Greek in 1972, these 'Notes' provide an insight into the world of authentic Orthodox Patristic Teaching championed by this renowned Theologian. Fr. John Romanides nurtured generations of Orthodox Theologians with the authentic spirit of Orthodox Patristic thought. He was a charismatic human being, extremely bright and perceptive. He 'boldly spoke the Truth of Christ' articulating the Theology of the Orthodox Church as a representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Church of Greece at countless conferences and as a delegate at various ecumenical interchurch and interfaith dialogues.
>
> I have no doubt that the 'Notes in Dogmatics' will not only nourish the students in our Seminary but everyone interested in delving into the fascinating world of Orthodox Patristic thought. I look forward to future publications of texts of this importance."[79]

Professor Fr. George Dragas notes, among other things, in his Preface:

> "This book represents my edition and translation of a typed manuscript of the first 'Notes in Dogmatics' (1972) of the late Fr.

78. Protopresbyter John Romanides, *An Outline of Orthodox Patristic Dogmatics*, edited and translated with an introduction and bibliography by Protopresbyter George Dion. Dragas, published by Orthodox Research Institute, New Hampshire 2004

79. Ibid. p. i

John Savas Romanides, which I translated and gave to my students studying Dogmatics at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. When in May 1999 Fr. John came to Holy Cross to receive an Honorary Doctorate (see *Greek Orthodox Theological Review vol. 44, 1999, pp. 821f),* I promised to publish the text as a book so that interested clergy and laypeople, and not only students, could use it as an introduction to Fr. Romanides' Orthodox Dogmatics. The advantage of this early outline in Dogmatics is that it provides most of the basic insights into Romanides' thought, which were later expanded, clarified and to some extent even modified, although they remained basically intact throughout his teaching career. I believe that this text will also facilitate researchers to rediscover the inner cohesion of Romanides' thought, which was not fully articulated.

Though I no longer teach Dogmatics, I am happy to publish the present introductory manual, as a small tribute to the memory of this most original, yet traditional, Greek Orthodox theologian of the contemporary Orthodox Diaspora and of the School in which I currently teach. Fr. Romanides was a theologian who has left his mark on many contemporary theologians through his pioneering writings. I had the privilege to acquaint myself and collaborate with him in the context of the contemporary ecumenical dialogue between Eastern Orthodoxy and the Churches of the Western Traditions. I came to appreciate the sharpness, coherence and originality of his thought and to enjoy his friendship.

...This early and brief *Outline of Orthodox Patristic Dogmatics* provides, in my opinion, a succinct, coherent and sharp introduction to Romanides' distinctive theological legacy."[80]

He also writes in his Introduction:

"As he explained to me on several occasions, growing up in a Western context and being fully exposed to Western Christian traditions, he was forced not to take his own Orthodoxy for granted, but to examine its depth and recover and defend its integrity. Thus, he became deeply convinced that the Orthodox Patristic Tradition was radically different from the Western Traditions which, due to

80. Ibid. pp. iii-iv

historic exigencies, had imposed their influence on the former...Fr. Romanides' unsophisticated honesty, matched with his important and distinctive theological recovery, would make any theologian that was in any conflict with him ready to become his friend. Indeed, anyone who came to know him personally found his friendship irresistible on account of his single-mindedness and dedication to a traditional and coherent presentation of holy Orthodoxy."[81]

It was, however, Fr. John's intention to expound dogmatic issues in detail and produce a complete reference book on Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church. In 1972, therefore, he published, in duplicated format, *Texts of Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church*, which circulated as 'Volume 2' and included the decisions of the Ecumenical and Local Councils from the First Ecumenical Synod in 325 AD until the Encyclical of the Council of Constantinople in 1838 AD *'Against the Latin Innovations'*.[82]

In parallel, in 1973, he published, again in duplicated format, what is described as 'Volume 1', entitled *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church*. This first volume is in two parts. The first is entitled 'Presuppositions of the Dogmas of the Ecumenical and Local Councils' and contains a detailed analysis of the theological method of the Fathers of the Church and the criteria for the theological method from the point of view of the Fathers and the other traditions. It also records the historical boundaries of Orthodox dogmatics and symbolic theology, as well as the historical context of Latin and Greek patristic theology, as distinct from the Franco-Latin tradition. The second part analyses at length the 'Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, namely the Teaching of the First, Second and Eighth Ecumenical Councils'. This chapter looks in detail at the following subjects: the link between the Old and New Testaments; the glory and rule (*vasileia*)* of

81. Ibid. pp. xiii

82. Protopresbyter John Romanides, *Dogmatiki kai symvoliki theologia tis Orthodoxou Katholikis Ekklisias, Kimena Dogmatika kai Symbolika tis Orthodoxou Katholikis Ekklisias,* Vol. 2, pub. P.S. Pournaras, Thessaloniki 1972 - in Greek

* **glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God** = kingdom of God. See 'Note by the Author' p. 23 - Translator's note

God; dogma and its formulation; Augustine and the errors of the Franco-Latins, Papal Christians and Protestants with regard to the dogma of the Holy Trinity[83].

Fr. John Romanides himself, in his Foreword to Volume 1[84], remarks that Volume 2, containing "the main dogmatic and symbolic texts of the Orthodox Catholic Church", "is the more important of the two." This means that his theology was based on the decisions of the Fathers of the Ecumenical and Local Councils because, as he notes, these texts "represent the indispensable prerequisite for mastering the dogmatic teaching of the Church and its official formulations and decrees." He goes on to make some significant observations, which form the basis of his theological thinking.

The first point is that the purpose of everything written in Volume 1 is "to guide readers towards an understanding of the dogmatic theology of Holy Scripture, the Holy Fathers and the Ecumenical and Local Councils of the Church." This understanding can be attained "only by means of the method of patristic theology, which is the same as that of the prophets and apostles, and therefore constitutes the whole foundation and presupposition for the decisions of the Ecumenical and Local Councils."

The second observation is that the method of the patristic tradition has no connection at all "with the speculative and dialectic method of philosophy and Franco-Latin – so-called scholastic – theology." This is because "Orthodox dogmatic theology is biblical and patristic and authentic. Its source is the lives of the saints, that is to say, the divine theoria (vision) in God of the prophets, apostles and saints, which is the divine revelation." What is more, he points out that anyone who desires to go more deeply into the dogmatic theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church "must be extremely attentive to what is written in the Holy Fathers about the spiritual life and perfection, and understand that, as there are degrees of spirituality, so there are also corresponding degrees of comprehension of the dogmas and participation in the mysteries of the faith."

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83. Protopresbyter John Romanides, *Dogmatiki kai symboliki theologia tis Orthodoxou Katholikis Ekklisias,* Vol. 1, pub. P.S. Pournaras, Thessaloniki 1973 – in Greek

84. Ibid. pp. 1-4

He goes on to make a very apt remark about those who study dogmatic and patristic issues in a speculative way, without having personal spiritual experience, and without understanding the 'spirit' of the holy Fathers. He writes, "Someone who follows the speculative and dialectic method of understanding the dogmas of the Church will never understand the truth. Someone who follows the spiritual method under the guidance of a spiritual father in the tradition of the glorified, but in the humble spirit of a disciple, will learn many things. The one who will learn nothing is he who, imitating the speculative thinkers of the West, submits the prophets, apostles and saints to his judgment, setting himself up as a judge over them concerning God's truth." This is an important and prophetic remark, which applies to the writings of contemporary speculative thinkers, whether they are theologians or not.

After these significant patristic and prophetic observations, he urges the reader to study the works of more recent theology professors. Among Greek theology professors he mentions John Karmiris, Panayiotis Trembelas, John Kaloyiros, Panayiotis Christou, Andreas Theodorou, Vasileios Dentakis and Metropolitan Chrysostom Constantinidis of Myron. Among non-Greek theologians he refers to Fr. Georges Florovsky, whom he regards as "the best guide to patristic theology" and the Romanian Fr. Dimitru Staniloae. He then recommends the reader to study the works of other recent theologians, whom he mentions, as he writes, in the bibliography. The bibliography is not, however, published in that volume.

This duplicated publication was published formally as a fourth edition in 1999 by the publishers Pournaras, while Fr. John Romanides was still alive, and was edited by Despina Kontostergiou. This printed edition begins with an article written by Fr. John Romanides, entitled *'Religion is a neurological illness and Orthodoxy is its cure'*, by way of an Introduction. This piece was first published in the volume *Orthodoxy, Hellenism, Progress in the 3rd Millennium*, published by the Monastery of Koutloumousiou on the Holy Mountain. It is significant that this text sets out Fr. John Romanides' fundamental theological thinking on issues including: Paradise and Hell; the spiritual life of Christians, which consists of purification, illumination (noetic prayer) and glorification according to Holy Scripture; theology and dogmas; the relation-

ship between the Prophets and the Fathers; sacred relics; and the way in which the Ecumenical Councils theologised.[85]

When Volume 1 was published containing the first and fourth chapters on 'Presuppositions of the Dogmas of the Ecumenical and Local Councils' and 'Doctrine of the Holy Trinity' respectively, it was announced that the remaining parts would also be published. These parts were: 'Creation, Fall and Salvation' (Part 3), 'Christology, Church, Divine Grace, Divine Sacraments and Eschatology' (Part 4), and 'Symbolic Theology', which contained historical and other information about the texts in Volume 2 (Part 5). Unfortunately in the end these parts were not published.

This deficiency, however, is compensated for by reading other monographs by Fr. John Romanides, and also by studying Andrew Sopko's thesis entitled *Prophet of Roman Orthodoxy, The Theology of John Romanides*, which sets out the whole theological and historical contribution of Fr. John Romanides and which, as the author admits, was produced under the guidance of Fr. Maximos Lavriotis, Fr. George Papadimitriou and Fr. John Romanides, all of whom he thanks. This is an authoritative interpretation of Fr. John Romanides' work.[86]

I read the writings of Fr. John Romanides for many years. I heard him speaking and analysing these issues. His spoken addresses were absorbing and enthused his hearers. If his written texts seemed rather dry, his spoken words were gripping. The written testimony of one of his students, Demos Tavlaridis, now a theology teacher in secondary education, is typical:

> "From his first classes a new breeze began to blow in the lecture hall of the School...I should not conceal the fact that those of us who entered the School in 1971 were the lucky ones who heard Fr. John teaching his fascinating Romanity as well as Orthodox patristic theology. That was a great blessing from God. He was the only one who taught about Western and Eastern Romanity, about

85. Protopresbyter John Romanides, *Dogmatiki kai symboliki theologia tis Orthodoxou Katholikis Ekklisias*, Vol. 1, 4th Edition, pub. P.S. Pournaras, Thessaloniki 1999 – in Greek

86. Andrew J. Sopko, *Prophet of Roman Orthodoxy, The Theology of John Romanides*, Synaxis Press, Dewdney BC, Canada 1998

Western Roman Fathers and Eastern Roman Fathers, as Romanity and Orthodox theology were unified in the two regions until the disruption caused by the Franks and their subjugation of the Western portion of the Great Roman Empire.

I also remember the following incident from his teaching. One day I was a few minutes late and the class had started on time. I arrived out of breath outside the hall, but it was impossible to enter. The corridor and the staircases outside were full of students from other Schools (mainly Philosophy, Law and Medicine). Many students had clambered up at the windows and inside the hall there was no room at all. A real crush of people...In the end I stayed outside and missed that class. This was an everyday phenomenon only when Fr. John was teaching. It showed, on the one hand, the quality of his teaching and, on the other, the lively messages that he conveyed.

As is well known, the permanent thorn constantly pricking the flesh of Western scholastic-intellectualistic theology and allowing it no rest is the light-bearing teaching of St Gregory Palamas. Fr. John analysed the saint's teaching for us in detail, so that we could grasp what Orthodoxy is, and that the pseudo-theology of the Western-minded Barlaam is the very opposite of our own theology. Thus, in his own way, he gave us the key to understanding empirical theology, which is the theology of our Church and its Fathers....

Fr. John Romanides was a real theologian, as he constantly yearned for the living empirical theology of the Fathers of our Church."[87]

The impressions of his student Thomas Shaw are characteristic. They reveal how Fr. John taught and which topics he analysed. Among other things, he writes:

"Two decades ago, while still a young Orthodox Christian, I had the privilege of hearing Fr. Alexander Schmemann speak. I cannot clearly remember now the topic of his talk, but one sentence still rings in my ears, 'What surprises those in the ecumenical movement is that, while they are discussing the great project of unification of the churches, the Orthodox are still talking about the Devil.'

87. Demos Tavlaridis, *Fr. John Romanides*, in the periodical *Koinonia*, Oct.-Nov 2002 - in Greek

Orthodoxy is still talking about the Devil because we continue to see his effect on the culture around us and we continue to experience his war upon the Church. Because we are engaged in this unseen warfare, Orthodox theology has always been dynamic. Each generation must discover the truths of the Holy Tradition anew, and in that process of discovery there will be differing understanding of the content of the Tradition. This dynamism has always brought forth controversial theologians within the Church. They are those who step outside the safe formulas and attempt to rephrase the Tradition using unfamiliar guideposts.

One such theologian is Fr. John Romanides. His work, in contrast to today's micro-specialists, presents a strong unified thesis that he applies over vast periods of time and place. His boldness is dismissed as simplistic and overly dogmatic by some.

I first encountered Fr. Romanides as a student of theology at the University of Thessaloniki. I was in the last course he taught in Orthodox Dogmatics before his retirement. I took classes from him for three years and have read most of his works, including *Franks, Romanism, Feudalism and Doctrine...*

Fr. Romanides was every bit the absentminded professor. His nickname at Holy Cross was Fr. Midnight because he seemed so unaware of his surroundings when he talked. He would always begin a lecture the same way. Sitting down, he would speak in a soft, almost inaudible, voice. Beginning almost in mid-thought, it seemed as if the lecture were already going on in his head. As he warmed to his subject his voice would rise and his eyes would flash. Sometimes he would become very quiet and would even seem to nod off for brief periods. His lectures were always well attended because he was a man with something to say. It seemed odd that even though his area of expertise was dogmatics, his lectures always seemed to be history. The details of the goings-on in 9th and 10th century France and Italy were constantly being related, or the details of 18th century France and Russia. He was criticized for this. After all, he was not a trained historian! But as a patristic theologian, he taught that the Fathers cannot be understood without understanding their history.

Fr. Romanides has an overarching thesis: the purpose of the

Church is to heal man of spiritual illness brought on by the Fall (this spiritual illness is characterized by the quest for happiness) and enable him to know God. His secondary thesis is that dogmatic controversies throughout the history of the Church are caused by those who do not understand the function of the Church as a spiritual hospital. Thus, the real difference with the West is their loss of this understanding which occurred because the Western ecclesiastical institutions were subverted by political forces into mere political institutions. As political institutions they became concerned with man's happiness instead of his glorification; with mere forgiveness of sins, rather than purification."[88]

Professor Despo Lialiou, one of his students at the Theological School in Thessaloniki and now Professor in the Department of Pastoral and Social Theology of the same Theological School and Vice Chancellor of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, bade Fr. John farewell at his funeral service in the following words, which reveal his gift for teaching:

"We have gathered today from the ends of the earth to perform the rite for our devoutly departed, beloved teacher, Father John Romanides, who walks in the light in the land of the living holy Prophets, Apostles and Fathers of our Church, whose divine experience he interpreted in word and deed.

Coming to Thessaloniki at the beginning of the 1970's and originating from the new extensive realms of Universal Hellenism abroad, Fr. John the Roman, noble citizen of the world, filled the halls of the Theological School of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki with the sweetness of our neptic tradition and the illumination of the words of the Fathers of our Church, tracing out, with no favouritism or partisanship, the course of our theological studies in the joint capital city. Fr. John left his mark on our thinking and our method, but also on our love for the Church as the Body of Christ, Whose members, living and departed, according to the measure of our receptiveness, participate in the gifts of the illumination of the Triune God. Thus Fr. John bestowed on us the vision of Life and Resurrection.

88. http://www.theorthodoxreader.org/vol1999/reader_017.htm

> In opposition to the study of virtue, which was the prevailing theology, and to all the different kinds of social prophecy, Fr. John spoke about knowledge of the historical roots of the ecclesiastical community, where salvation is the gift of the grace of the Triune God, and not the award for our non-existent virtue, where our salvation is uncreated according to grace, as a freely-given cure from God for the human image of the ineffable glory of the only immortal existing God. We therefore have a sure hope that 'The dead will rise and those in the tombs will be raised up.' Christ is risen, dear teacher."

Professor Panayiotis Christinakis, on behalf of the Department of Social Theology of the Theological School of Athens referred at the funeral service to the Fr. John's personality, but also to his theological work, saying, "Words are inadequate to describe someone like Fr. John."

He went on to stress two significant incidents in Fr. John's life, two testimonies, which he regarded as expressing his personality.

The first concerned an incident to which he himself was a witness. Fr. John was accustomed to pray as he walked along, and on this occasion, absorbed in prayer as he was, he did not return the greeting of one of his students. In this way his hidden virtue was finally revealed. "It was a sign that first and foremost he was a man of God," as Professor Christinakis characteristically remarked.

The second point concerned his academic work and specifically his doctoral thesis, *The Ancestral Sin*. Among the many Doctors produced by the 'academic nest' of the Athens Theological School, Fr. John stood out: "In the case of Fr. John, allow me to say that, with his doctoral thesis, it immediately seemed to me that what had hatched out was a young eagle, that it was going to become, as it did, an eagle. It flew away, far from here and went to Thessaloniki." His colleagues in Athens followed his later career with pride, because they regarded him as their own professor, up to and including the last years of his life, which he described as "the cross of Christ and His Easter light."

Professor Christinakis sent Fr. John on his way with the prayer:

> "May his memory be eternal, because he illumined and illumines us greatly."

Professor George Metallinos, on behalf of the Department of Theology at the Theological School of the University of Athens, in his address at the funeral service briefly explained how robust Fr. John Romanides' theological message was. Part of his address was as follows:

> "He restored the priority of patristic empirical theology, setting aside the intellectual, speculative and metaphysical approach to theology. He combined academic theology with worship and the philokalic tradition, demonstrating the mutual interpenetration of theology and the spiritual life, and the pastoral, therapeutic character of dogmatic theology. He discerned the close connection between dogma and history and adopted it in his theological method. Consequently he was able to comprehend as could few others the alienation and decline of theology in Western Europe, which came about through the Frankish conquest and domination...
>
> Esteemed and beloved Fr. John, as your friends, colleagues and associates, we express our gratitude to you for everything that, by God's grace, you gave us. Thousands of your direct and indirect students do the same. We keep the theological deposit that you entrusted to us as a staff in the darkness spread everywhere by selfishness, indifference and self-interest. You united us with the patristic tradition in the realm of academic theology, referring us constantly to worship and asceticism, where true theology is cultivated. We thank you! May your memory be eternal, until we meet again at the heavenly altar, dear Colleague and beloved Concelebrant."[89]

The impressions of his student Lambros Siasou, now a Professor of the Theological School of Thessaloniki, as he voiced them during the funeral service, are also typical, under the title *Chromatic Word at the Funeral of the Priest John Romanides.*

> "From the innumerable students
> we too come
> to this funeral
> devoted and humble attendants.

89. Fr. George Metallinos, op. cit., pp. 60-61

Undertaking on behalf
of the Theological School of Thessaloniki
this blessed task.

Accompanied to this sacred ecclesiastical
and hierarchical rite
by the deepest grief of the Professors
and Students of our School.

Bringing our prayers
through the Saints and the All-Holy Theotokos
to the Thrice-Holy, Ancient of Days:

To accept the soul
of our colleague who has fallen asleep,
of our beloved teacher,
and to set him in the land of the living.

We do this
out of obligation
and justly,
and ecclesiastically.

Of all the innumerable Schools under the sun
the professor priest John Romanides
honoured in the end
the Theological School of the University of Thessaloniki.

He chose it irrevocably
as his firm academic base
to pass on to those studying there
everything – dry as dust before –
the sweat of his brow
had reverently moistened.

In its third Amphitheatre
his meek,
even on occasions sharp,
tones still echo.

There we were taught about
the Unincarnate and Incarnate Word of God Himself.

A Cappadocian living abroad
and proud of it,
there he read sublime studies
of the Cappadocian Fathers on Dogmatics:

'On the Theological Method in General'
for the uninformed.
(And then we were and are many.)

'On the Theological Method More Specialised'
for the advanced.
(And then there were few to be found.)

There students from other Schools of the University
came and packed the place too full to breathe.
And Father John filled the place
where we were sitting.

He was majestic
and we were feeble.
He read from memory, from his heart,
sayings of men of the Church.

Beginning with the Mighty-Voiced Isaiah
- Oh! how new and yet how ancient! -
Going through the divinely inspired writers
of the New Scriptures.

By way of the Martyr – whom he loved –
St Justin,
Athanasius the Great,
and back to the Cappadocians.

Pausing a long time
at St Photius,
whom he loved exceedingly
and honoured greatly
and read too much.

He always finished his words and
came to rest with our own
Holy Archbishop of Thessaloniki
Gregory Palamas.

Grafting his teaching into the ecclesiastical,
holy yet austere order.

Learned but also sacerdotal,
John the professor and priest
held out his hands and embraced
– being both courageous and affectionate –
the whole of history, sacred and secular.

He struggled ceaselessly to distinguish between
the elements of confusion and the hard-to-discern frontier.

Through them and from them
Father John has stirred up afresh,
in bold and lively fashion, theological studies
in Greece and abroad.

He was fearlessly daring
before audiences of foreign specialists.

And confessed proudly everything that
the priestly ranks before him
taught as dogma and confessed.

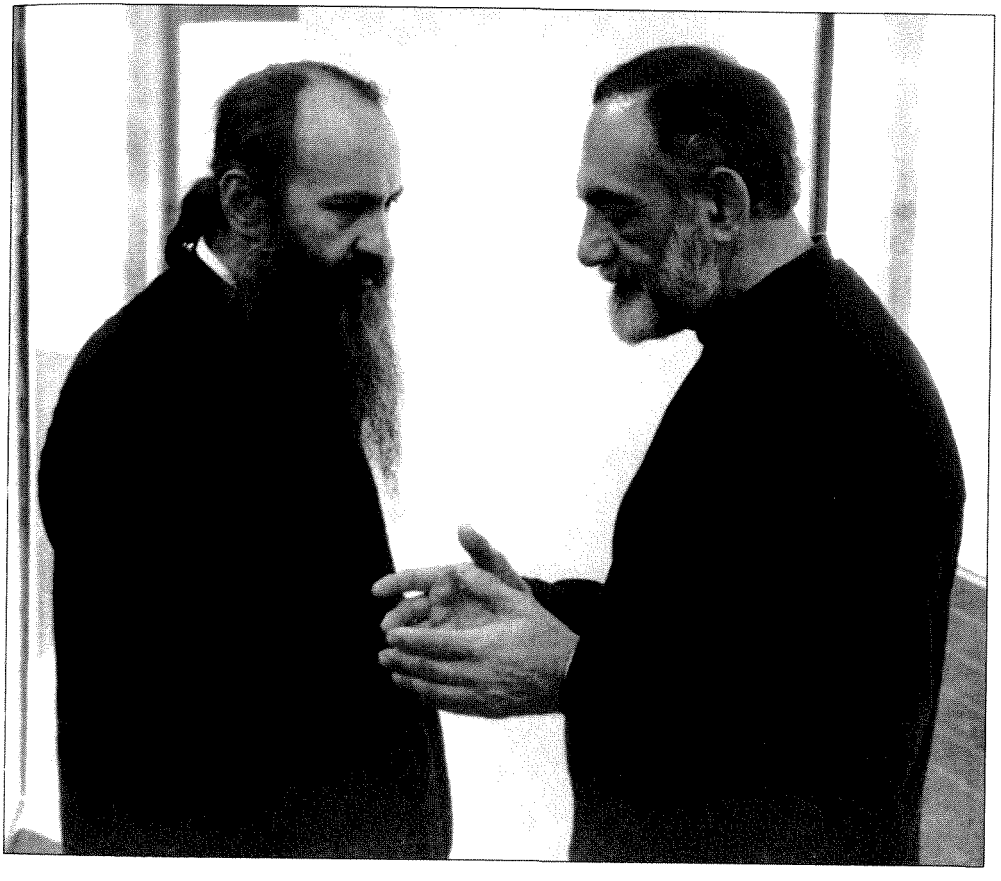
My voice is feeble and I can hardly speak,
I am unable to conclude my words on my own.

Allow me to draw strength and words
from elsewhere,
from a very ecclesiastical man.

John the Priest,
a wise man and a teacher,
'has departed
a zealot breathing fire,
harsh in his sincerity
with a cutting tongue,
striking with innocent tongue
like Elijah who struck
"with innocent hands"
the priests of abominations' "[90]

In this volume and the one that will follow I shall present extracts from the living and spoken teaching of Fr. John Romanides. The connection between the dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church and the experience of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the glorified will become clear.

90. Lambros Siasos, *Chromatic Word at the Funeral of the Priest John Romanides* in the periodical *Ekklisiastiki Parembasi*, Vol. 70, Nov. 2001 – in Greek



In Vancouver, Canada, 1995

Part 1

Dogma and Ethics

Dogma and Ethics

The Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils pronounced on various dogmatic and canonical issues that had arisen in their time. Dogmas are called definitions, because they define the boundaries between truth and error and put into words the revelation of God given to the saints. Ethics and morals are the application of dogma. They are the practical experience associated with the dogma and refer to the Christian's whole life, but also to the unity of the Church.

Consequently there is a very close connection between dogma and ethics, between faith and life. It is impossible to separate the two. This issue will be examined in the following pages. We shall look first at the essence and significance of dogma and then at the essence and significance of ethics.

1. Dogma

When we refer here to dogmas, we do not use the word in a philosophical, academic, sociological or religious sense, but from an ecclesiastical and theological point of view. Dogmas are to be found in all humanistic and social organisations. What is significant, however, is how the Church speaks about dogmas through the holy Fathers.

a) Definition of Dogma

Dogmas are the pronouncements of the holy Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils, when they confronted heretical teachings that were altering the revealed truth. First there was a heretical doctrine about Christ, or the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Triune God in general, or concerning the theology of the Persons of the Holy Trinity and the divine Economy, which is the incarnation of the Son and Word of God. Then the holy Fathers would meet in Local and Ecumenical Councils and formulate definitions of the Orthodox faith.

The central Person discussed by the holy Fathers was Christ, in Whom the divine and human nature were united without change, confusion, separation or division. The holy Fathers did not have abstract philosophical discussions about the Holy Trinity.

> "They always discussed this particular Person Who appeared to the Prophets and revealed the Father within Himself in the Holy Spirit. So they did not discuss the dogma of the Holy Trinity in an abstract way, but discussed this specific Person in the Old Testament Who was revealed to the Prophets and afterwards in the flesh to the Apostles."

The demarcation of the revelation is called dogma. Essentially, however, dogma shows Christ revealed in glory. It is an expression of the divine manifestations (theophanies) in both the Old and New Testa-

ments. Dogma is not a simple external confession of faith, but a formulation of revelatory truth. And the holy Fathers had a special reason for undertaking this, because heretics had doubts about the revelation. There is, therefore, a difference between dogma and interpretation.

> "For the Fathers of the Church, when we refer to the dogma of the Holy Trinity, we mean the theophanies. It is not a matter of 'three hypostases', 'one essence', '*homoousios*', or any of these things, which are conceptual criteria against the heretics. When the Fathers interpreted the Holy Trinity they did not use those terms. They are for heretics.
>
> When they teach within the Church (in sermons for Christians), they give interpretations. The Holy Trinity means the theophanies of the Old Testament. Why do we chant about the revelation of the Holy Trinity at the Baptism of Christ? Because it was revealed to John the Baptist that Christ is the Angel of the Lord of the Old Testament; that when we see Christ we see the Father, in the Holy Spirit."

It follows that dogmas are used as medicines for the spiritually sick, so that they may be cured.

> "Dogma and theology are medicines. When we become well, we stop taking medicines. We take medicines when we are ill. Man is ill because he is not in a position to see God. He is not ready, because he does not have love. The fact that he does not have love means that he is ill."

In the same way as a patient takes medicines in order to be cured and become well, so someone who is spiritually sick uses medicines so as to be cured and attain to glorification. When he reaches glorification, of course, the dogma-medicines are inadequate. They are not abolished by the Church, because they will be needed by others who are sick, but they are insufficient and unnecessary for someone who arrives at glorification and sees the glory of God.

> "Dogmas are not a permanent state. They are medicines, and the purpose of medicines is to be done away with, once the patient has been cured. When we are cured we no longer need medicines. So dogmas exist as long as we do not see Christ in glory. Once we see

Christ in glory, dogma is abolished. What are the dogmas about? They concern Christology and the Holy Trinity. What need is there for words and concepts about the incarnation and the Holy Trinity, when we see Christ as Holy Trinity and incarnation?"

Of course, the dogmas of the Ecumenical Councils are indispensable even for the glorified, because through these dogmas revealed truth is defined.

b) Dogma and Mystery

It is essential to make a distinction between dogma and mystery. The mystery of the Holy Trinity is experienced, to the extent that this is possible, by the glorified human being and is different from the dogma, which is the rational formulation concerning the mystery of the Holy Trinity or the revelation. This distinction is fundamental to Orthodox theology.

"God is always a mystery. The mystery of the Holy Trinity must be separated from the dogma of the Holy Trinity. The dogma is not the same as the mystery."

This means that the dogma can be understood rationally, but not the mystery. There is confusion on this issue in some contemporary theologians and a serious problem arises. For instance, when we speak about the Holy Trinity, we are referring to the dogma, the terminology concerning the Holy Trinity, as formulated by the holy Fathers of the Church (essence, hypostases, hypostatic property, and so on) and not to the mystery of the Holy Trinity. We cannot speak about "the mystery of the Holy Trinity", which is inconceivable to human reason, but we can speak about "the dogma concerning the mystery of the Holy Trinity".

"One needs clearly to distinguish the dogma from the mystery. Understanding the mystery (rationally), which is impossible, is completely different from understanding the dogma, which is possible. It is possible for someone to understand the dogma.

There is so much confusion in recent theology, under the influence of Russian theology, that anyone would think that an expert on dogmatics or a theologian of the Orthodox Church is someone who reflects deeply and immerses himself in the mystery of the Holy

Trinity, and attempts to put it into words. The patristic tradition has absolutely no connection with this sort of perception of theology."

The names and concepts that a God-seeing saint formulates when necessary are one thing and the experience that he has acquired of this reality is another.

"What is important is this perception of the relationship that names and concepts have with reality. The mystery remains a mystery. We do not put the mystery into words, but the dogma about the mystery. We speak about the dogma about the mystery of the Holy Trinity; not about the mystery of the Holy Trinity."

The same can be said of the distinction between Holy Scripture and God. Holy Scripture consists of the words and concepts expressing the experience of the mystery of God, and these words and concepts are not identical to God. God is not identified with the words and concepts, as will be emphasised in another part of this book. Identifying God with them leads to idolatry.

"For this reason you must have a firm grasp of this distinction between the mystery and the dogma. They are not the same thing, because theology, dogma and noetic prayer will be abolished: they are temporary in character. It is idolatry for us to identify God with words and concepts about Him. From this point of view, you can take the existentialism of certain (at least in my opinion) pseudo-theologians and throw them all into the waste paper bin. Because the only correct existential philosophy from the Orthodox point of view is the atheistic one and not the theistic."

Even this viewpoint, that we can understand dogma, ought to be interpreted from the perspective that we can have a rational understanding of the purpose, origin and history of the dogma, but not of the dogma in itself or the spiritual meaning it conveys.

"To say that we understand dogmas is foolishness. No one understands the dogma of the Holy Trinity, because the dogma of the Holy Trinity is not intended to be understood. Anyone who gives the impression that he understands the dogma of the Holy Trinity is a fraud. This is the worst deception.

It is possible to understand the purpose of the dogma, its or-

igin and its history. But it is impossible for someone to understand the dogma itself, because understanding the dogma means understanding the mystery. The dogma and the mystery are different things. They must never be confused.

Dogma exists as man's guide. It is a signpost that shows him where he ought to be going. When, however, he reaches his destination, it is done away with. For that reason, dogma is a guide for those who are passing through purification, and carries on being a guide for those who continue in illumination. It is a guide and nothing more. But those who are at the stage of illumination know that one day dogma will be abolished.

When someone reaches glorification, dogma is abolished. Dogma ceases to exist. Noetic prayer itself stops. Although the Spirit of God prays within man with psalms, hymns or phrases – the Spirit Himself prays with human words within man – when man attains to glorification even this noetic prayer of the Holy Spirit ceases.

This is what the Apostle Paul says: *'When that which is perfect comes, then prophecies will cease,'* in other words, theology will come to an end; *'tongues will cease,'* that is, the various kinds of noetic prayer will stop; and *'knowledge will vanish away,'* (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8-13), in other words, what are nowadays called dogmas and theology. All these things come to an end in glorification.

Certainly, when someone returns from glorification, when he ceases to have the vision of God, he continues praying once again with dogmas and the Spirit again prays within him as before. In this life the state of glorification is not permanent."

Even when God is revealed to man, He still remains a mystery. Man knows from experience that God exists, but he does not know 'how' He exists.

"Neither the incarnation nor the dogma of the Holy Trinity can be understood. For that reason, even when God is revealed, then especially, He remains a mystery. The human nous cannot penetrate this mystery of uncreatedness, and how what is uncreated took flesh and is united with human nature. We only know, because it is clear from the experience of Pentecost and the Transfiguration and from St John the Forerunner's experience of glorification at the Baptism,

which is a revelation, the supreme revelation, of the Holy Trinity; that God remains a mystery.

As this is so, it is nonsensical for us sit there asserting, like the Protestants and the Franks*, that as time passes we have a deeper understanding of the dogmas of the Church. What does a deeper understanding mean, when, in the experience of glorification, of Pentecost, dogma has been abolished and the concepts and words that constitute dogmas have been done away with? The experience of glorification is not dogma. It is higher than dogma. Dogma is the expression of the mystery, but expressing the mystery is not the same as comprehending the mystery, because 'It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.' That is the end of the matter."

c) Dogma as an Expression of Experience and a Guide to Experience

Dogma was not formulated by philosophers, moralists or conservatives in order to restrain people, but by holy Fathers, who had experience of the uncreated glory of God. It was drawn up in order to deal with heretics and to guide the faithful to glorification. Dogma, therefore, is closely linked with the experience of glorification of the God-seeing saints.

The foundation of dogma is the experience of the saints. By accepting the dogmas and being in contact with glorified saints and their writings, we inherit their experience and not simply their words and the decisions that they laid down.

"The interpretative method of the Fathers is not drawn only from books that they read. It also comes from their experience. When they speak about dogmas, they not only interpret texts but also speak from their experience, like an astronomer who, when he teaches, not

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* **Franks**: Fr. Romanides frequently uses the terms 'Franks' and 'Frankish' not to refer to an ethnic group but to denote Christians who follow the 'Frankish' scholastic theological tradition, in contrast to what he regards as the 'Roman' Orthodox patristic tradition. He sometimes also uses the term 'Latins' in the same sense as 'Franks'. – Translator's note

only speaks from books about astronomy, but also looks through the telescope and corroborates with the telescope what is written in the books. In fact the telescope is more important than the books. Similarly in patristic theology, the nous of those who are illumined is even more important than books. When the nous is in the state of illumination it is like the astronomer who looks through the telescope. This is the experience of dogma. We have not only inherited the dogma. There is also the experience of dogma. The same happens with heretics. When Arius or Nestorius make senseless statements, they are not only speaking from books. They are also speaking from their (mistaken) experience – because dogma produces experience – in the same way as any modern scientist speaks from his experience."

The holy Fathers formulated the experience of glorification and, since they had the same revelation, when they met in Ecumenical Councils they were in agreement on the wording as well.

"In the years when the dogmas were being formulated, the Fathers' experience was identical. So when the Fathers spoke from their own experience, they could easily reach agreement on putting it into words. It was easy. There was no difficulty.

Where did the difficulty lie? It was not formulating the dogma that was difficult, but formulating it in such a way that it could not be interpreted in a heretical manner. That was the Fathers' problem."

The fact that the dogmas are the formulation of the saints' experience of glorification is one aspect of this issue. The other aspect is that the dogmas lead those who accept them to glorification, and become their own experience.

"Since the aim of theology is purification and illumination of the nous, and dogma is the expression of this experience of glorification, dogma is infallible in the Orthodox Church, because it is the expression of the experience of glorification of the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers of the Church.

However, we do not know the dogma that is the expression of the experience of glorification only as dogma. We also know it as the experience of the saints of the Church, or of anyone who reaches the same experience of glorification. We have dogma that is an expres-

sion of the experience of glorification, and after that we have dogma that becomes experience for those who reach glorification."

Consequently dogma is the expression of the experience of glorification and the guide towards glorification.

"Nothing else can be called theology from the Orthodox point of view. The only thing that can be called dogma in the Orthodox tradition is the expression of the experience of glorification. This dogma, this expression, is also the guide to the experience. Exactly the same happens in the positive sciences, where previous experience, description and expression lead to the repetition of the experience by students. This cycle that we have in the positive sciences is the same cycle that we have in the patristic tradition."

This means that Orthodox theology forms a circle: it starts from the revelation granted to the God-seers, then this experience of the vision of God is put into words, as far as this is humanly possible, in order to guide those who accept it to an experience of the revelation. It is in this sense that we say that dogmas are closely linked with man's cure.

"This is the essence of Orthodox dogmatic teaching. All the Orthodox dogmas flow from this experience, because this is the revelation. They flow from this experience and their aim is to lead man to this experience. We begin with this experience and we end with this experience.

Orthodox theology, therefore, is circular in form. Wherever you touch the circle, you are always on the circle. We begin and end with this diagnosis and treatment. So, what is the criterion of Orthodoxy? It is not dogma as a formality, a matter of saying, 'I believe in one God, Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth...' and the rest, or reciting all the dogmas one after the other, or talking about the First, Second, Third etc. Ecumenical Councils...

What is the criterion of Orthodoxy? It is the teaching that correctly diagnoses man's state, applies the correct treatment and leads him from purification to illumination, and from illumination to glorification. This is the criterion of Orthodox dogma. The aim of Orthodox dogma is to cure people and to safeguard the framework within which this cure takes place."

Thus the purpose of the dogmas is not simply to be written in books and shut up in libraries, but to become personal experience, to be lived. This actually happens in all the sciences, including medicine. We study medical science in order to heal the sick. We accept the dogmas intellectually, so that later they will become experience.

"Someone who is glorified, who has the gift of discernment of spirits, is in the state of theoria (vision) and prayer works by a single thought* within his heart. He has the truth in his possession. This truth will set him free. Not the dogmatic truth that we set up in our cupboard when we venerate Orthodox dogmas: that is not the truth that saves.

We believe that we have the dogmas – the First Ecumenical Council teaches...., the Second..., the Third... and so on. These are the dogmatic teachings of the Church. And we have the idea that the truth will save us, in the sense that we ought to accept all the dogmas of the Ecumenical Councils as something outside ourselves, so that we can be free and have salvation. This is a Frankish perception of how we should accept dogmas.

In the Orthodox faith – if you want, you will find many references to this in St Symeon the New Theologian – dogma ought to be lived. Dogma ought to be experience. Dogma should be learnt empirically. Initially we accept dogma intellectually, like a lesson, and once we have accepted it, the lesson ought to be converted into experience. Dogma must become experience.

This is precisely what happens in the positive sciences. I am studying medicine. I take the first classes in the first year, as a first-year student. I study one thing and another, the preliminaries. Then I reach the point of choosing a specialism, to become a pathologist, for instance, and of course there will be preparatory work beforehand. To become a doctor I have to go and work in a hospital. I need practice, and the dogmas of medical science have to become experiences. Once they become experiences, I am a doctor. It is not simply a matter of accepting the dogmas: the dogmas must become experiences. And when the dogmas become experiences, one be-

* 'Single-thought' or 'one-word' prayer in the heart usually refers to the prayer 'Lord Jesus Christ Son of God have mercy on me.' – Translator's note

comes a theologian and a spiritual physician, and is correctly placed within the framework of the Church and the theological science of therapeutic treatment."

"St Symeon the New Theologian says it clearly. He says it word for word: experience-dogma-experience. He uses those words."

In the normal way the clergy, particularly the bishops, ought to know the truths of the Church empirically. The early Church was very careful on this point. However, if they did not find clergy with personal experience of Pentecost to become bishops, they at least sought out clergy who knew the Church's dogmas and could use them to guide the flock.

"If we turn to the era of St Symeon the New Theologian, he tells us that, as it was not easy to find prospective bishops who had made the dogmas their own experiences, the 'statement of Orthodoxy' was brought in. This is the three confessions of faith that the bishop now makes at his consecration. He gives an interpretation of the Creed and then he is consecrated.

St Symeon the New Theologian says that, since the Metropolitans and Patriarchs could not find people who had made the dogmas their own experiences, they found people who promised to preserve the dogmas unadulterated, that is to say, to keep the formulation of the dogmas, the dogmatic teaching, unaltered, together with the Canons, so that every Christian could be sure that he had a faithful chief shepherd, who would lead the more advanced to higher things, which means theoria.

Well, this is the situation. The bishop, however, knew the purpose of dogma, even if he had not reached theoria or glorification. And this situation came about because there was a bishop in every village. Then we have the tradition that in every village there was also a monastery. So dogma as experience existed next to the parish."

For various reasons this tradition had been lost in the era of St Symeon the New Theologian. Through his words and writings he brought about a revolution in ecclesiastical life, because he showed how dogma becomes experience, and how dogma originates from revelational experience.

"He himself explains that, on account of persecutions, repeated persecutions, and heresies, the Church had reached a point where the bishops, patriarchs, metropolitans of the time were searching for people with experience of dogma – the dogma that guides people to pass through purification and reach illumination, unceasing remembrance of God, at which point these guiding values are transformed into experience – and they could not find anyone.

For that reason they chose and consecrated as bishops people who, on the one hand, had no great zeal for things above, for heavenly things, for practising extreme asceticism in order to achieve noetic prayer, but neither did they have any downward tendency or inclination. They were good men. And because they were good men, they chose them and consecrated them as bishops. It was then that the tradition was introduced at the consecration of giving a confession of faith, which continues to this day.

When the bishop is consecrated he says the Creed, he gives an interpretation of the Creed and promises to keep the dogmas and the Canons. With this promise that he will preserve these forms, they consecrate him as a bishop. In this way the Church ensured the existence of teachers who promised until death that they would preserve and keep these dogmas unadulterated, so that when people had been catechised by such a bishop, they could go to a monastery, if they were zealous, to turn these dogmas into life."

It follows that dogmas are not a matter of speculation, but an expression of the mystery of the Church. The view that theology is conjecture, which the holy Fathers changed into dogma, is alien to the Orthodox tradition.

"I recently read a study which said that the procession of the Holy Spirit, until the era of St Photius, was pure speculation. In other words, the author imagines that the Fathers speculated about the procession of the Holy Spirit and that it had not become a dogma. Then under St Photius it becomes a dogma instead of a matter of conjecture, at which point speculation ceases, because now we have a dogma. For eight centuries we speculated and now we have created a dogma.

The Protestants and the Anglicans accuse us of taking a matter of conjecture and elevating it to the status of a dogma, thus causing schism. Because the fact that it was previously a matter of speculation means that someone could say that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and from the Son, and he was not a heretic. Or only from the Father, and again he was not a heretic. And now he is a heretic, because this is what the Eighth Ecumenical Council decided."

But such views are not Orthodox and patristic.

d) The Anti-Heretical and Therapeutic Purpose of Dogma

It was pointed out earlier that dogmas are a formulation of the experience of the saints and lead to the experience of revelation. They are a record of experience and a guide to experience. This also reveals that the purpose of dogmas, which we shall examine further in this section, is dealing with heresies and guiding the faithful.

"The dogmas of the Church are the axioms that originate from this experience of purification, illumination and glorification. Dogmas are not the outcome of conjectures, as Western theologians, historians of dogma and our own people who follow them, believe.

Dogmas did not result from the speculative endeavour of clever theologians indulging in philosophy. Dogmas are formulations of the teaching of the Church, produced by the Fathers of the Church to protect it from heresies. Because every time a dogma was formulated, it was done in order to counter a specific heresy.

The Church never gathered to formulate dogma for the sake of the conjectural expertise of theologians, who sit in their university chairs speculating on the basis of philosophy, sociology and so on. No such thing has ever happened. All the Ecumenical and Local Councils, whenever they were engaged in drawing up dogma, were always opposing a particular heresy.

This is the precise historical reality. From the point of view of the patristic tradition, the formulation of dogma against heresy was an expression of the mystical experience of the Church. Because heresy was opposed to the life of the Church and contrary to the

experience of the Church. What is this experience? It is purification, illumination and glorification. Orthodoxy is anything that accords with this experience."

The Ecumenical Councils were convened in order to counter heresy and heretics, but at the same time to catechise the faithful, in order to protect them from heresy. Their purpose was also to cure people, so that they might acquire unceasing prayer and reach glorification. In this context we can see the value of dogmas.

"The strange thing is that, on account of the Arian heresy – because of the nature of Arian teaching – the Orthodox Church was compelled to introduce a new terminology into the formulation of dogmas, to word dogmas correctly, so that Christians would not stray into heresies and risk their salvation."

"The holy Fathers, from the therapeutic point of view, were trying to find a common terminology. Essentially, from the point of view of the internal structure of the Church, which means purification, illumination, glorification, sacramental life and so on, there was no need for this formulation. But the formulation was necessary for catechetical purposes, and so the faithful could be protected from heretics and know who the correct teachers were, and be able to find treatment. This treatment did not exist among the heretics."

It is clear that, as well as dealing with heretics, the terminology also contributes to curing people – the faithful – so "dogma is dogmatic treatment". It has "therapeutic significance". This being the case, the criteria of Orthodox theology "are not conventionally dogmatic, but therapeutic".

"Now, the therapeutic part is the most important of all, because if someone does not pass through the treatment, the fact that he accepts the dogmas is of no significance, according to the Fathers. The purpose of the dogmas is to be used as medicines for man's cure.

Dogma is a medicine. The strange thing is that, just as in the experience of glorification even Holy Scripture comes to an end, together with all concepts and words, so dogma too is abolished in the experience of glorification. What is a dogma? Is it not concept and word? Dogmas are concepts and words. They are no different

from Holy Scripture and from all the thoughts in general that we have about God.

This raises the whole issue of how dogmas developed in the Orthodox Church. Was it because the Fathers wanted to understand nature philosophically, or did dogmas develop negatively, against heresies?

If you consider dogmas – and we shall consider them, if you want us to follow the whole subject from one Ecumenical Council to the next – you will see that every time the Church made one of its teachings into a dogma, it did so, not in an effort to understand the faith, but to rid the Church of heretics who were distorting the faith. The paradox is that it was the heretics who were attempting to understand the faith philosophically, not the Fathers."

The dogmas also orientate us correctly towards the experience of glorification.

"Subsequently, we ought to be aware of the purpose of dogma in the patristic tradition, which is to help man with the concepts he has about God. These dogmatic concepts help him on the path of purification and illumination. And when he reaches glorification, the dogma, of course, comes to an end and he has before him the mystery of the Holy Trinity."

This means that no one can look at dogma apart from the path leading to illumination and glorification.

"We formulate dogmas about God, which do not express God but are signposts towards illumination and glorification. A guide towards glorification. If dogmas are taken out of the context of worship and asceticism, they make no sense. Separate the dogma of the Holy Trinity from worship and the experience of illumination and glorification, and from the rational point of view it is complete nonsense. It tells us nothing. From the philosophical viewpoint it is completely untenable. Why? Because the Fathers do not begin by thinking. They begin from that specific Person Who appeared to the Prophets. The Angel, Who is called God, appears in the burning bush. He is Christ."

Every science and every social achievement needs to be examined to

see how successful it is and what results it produces. The dogmas of the Church ought to be examined in the same way. Dogmas are successful when they lead people to purification, illumination and glorification.

> "What is the criterion for Orthodox theology? Success. Of what use is Orthodox dogma to us, if it does not lead anyone to purification and illumination?
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> There are some fanatics here in Greece who have no idea about purification and illumination. All day long they bark like dogs in support of Orthodox dogmas and against heresies. What can we do with an Orthodox Christian like that? He is narrow-minded and has no idea about curative treatment.
>
> So what is the criterion for this individual? Can I accept as a criterion simply a blind devotion to Orthodoxy, or should I have the success of Orthodoxy as my criterion? And what is this success, other than purification and illumination?"

The same can be observed when people are conservative and accept the dogmas, but do not regard them as therapeutic means. They do not see the relationship between dogma and treatment. In fact they turn revelational life into social life.

> "Some important theologians have appeared nowadays in Greece, influenced by foreigners, who attempt to translate the Gospel message, Christianity and even Orthodoxy, into social Christianity, with social action as its main concern. There are some Orthodox among them, who remain outwardly faithful to the tradition. They accept all the dogmas. In some cases they are very conservative. But they no longer regard the dogmas as therapeutic means. Dogmas no longer have any connection with treatment.
>
> They think that the dogmas exist to be put in a cupboard and taken out occasionally to be venerated, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, when we celebrate one of the Ecumenical Councils or one of the great Fathers of the Church. Then we take out the dogmas, dust them, and present them liturgically. The Church really does have fine services, and we honour the dogmas. And as soon as the veneration comes to an end, we put them back in the cupboard to gather dust again, so that we can take them out again next year, dust them once more and venerate them again.

They see no connection between dogma and treatment. We have reached the point that a certain Archbishop, not from the Church of Greece, told us at a conference that Arius was a saint! We sat there with our mouths open. He said, 'He was a holy man, but he went wrong on dogmatic issues. All the same, he was a saint.' Obviously he identified sanctity with the fact that Arius was probably a good man."

To help us to understand the purpose of dogma, the quotation from St Gregory the Theologian is worth noting: "It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him."

"We have frequently emphasised that the purpose of words and concepts in the Orthodox tradition is never the rational understanding of dogma. We have words and concepts about God, the Holy Trinity, the incarnation and so on. The purpose of these words cannot be understanding, in the sense of rational conception. The Fathers stress that it is 'even more impossible to conceive Him'. Because it is 'even more impossible to conceive Him,' the purpose of the concept cannot be understanding. And 'it is impossible to express'. So when we give expression to God in words, these words are those that cannot express God. 'It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.'

Taking account of this saying of Gregory the Theologian, what is the purpose of these words and concepts? Why 'express' and 'conceive'? Concepts and words. The aim is not understanding, since God is beyond man's conceiving and expression. The purpose of the words and concepts is union with God, Who is beyond words and concepts. Actual union."

If we do not regard dogmas from this perspective, if we do not strive to experience them, then the dogmas are not actually fulfilling their purpose and they become 'heresy'.

"The terminology should always keep the potential for purification, illumination and so on. Because without purification and illumination, salvation does not exist. This is salvation: purification and illumination. We think now that salvation means believing Orthodox dogmas. We are like idolaters who take the dogmas, put them in

the cupboard and sit there prostrating ourselves before the dogmas, which we do not live in our lives.

Dogma is not to be believed. Dogma is to be experienced. Because dogma without experience is heresy. The worst heresy is for people to sit at their desks and assume that they can reflect deeply and think great thoughts about dogmatic issues. That is the greatest stupidity. As a methodology it is completely untenable. Only someone who is completely naïve, who has no idea at all of academic methodology, could accept such things."

e) Dogma and Ecclesiastical Life

The Church through its holy members, who are illumined by the Holy Spirit, writes Holy Scripture and the Church interprets it. Nothing individual happens within the Church. The same is true of dogmas, which are not cut off from the atmosphere of the Church. Dogmatics is not one subject or one single department of the Church. It is not an independent element of ecclesiastical life. The dogmas ought to be closely linked with the sacramental life of the Church. The whole life of the Church is highly significant.

"The expression of Orthodox theology is not only what we find in dogmatic texts. The entire Orthodox faith is an expression of Orthodox theology and dogmatics. Consequently there are many aspects to the correct approach to dogmatics."

No one can look at ecclesiastical life in isolation. Even ecclesiastical music, for instance, is dogmatic in character. The same applies to all the other ecclesiastical arts, such as iconography.

"From this point of view, I think that the Orthodox tradition should always be seen as a whole, not looked at in isolation. It is impossible really to separate things into watertight compartments, to say: 'This is a dogmatic issue, this is ethical, that is sociological, this is musical, this is liturgical...' There is nothing like that in the Orthodox tradition. The Orthodox tradition contains all the elements that combine to make up the structure of the whole Church.

Even the Church's music has a dogmatic character. No one can

chant in church in any way he pleases. Music has a purpose, exactly the same purpose as theology: asceticism. If we have music in church that provokes demonic feelings, that music is demonic. Not that what provokes erotic love is demonic in itself, but it is not the purpose of the Church. We cannot have romantic relationships with the saints, Christ, the All-Holy Virgin, as they have in the Latin Church. Their attitude towards the saints is romantic, so their music is effeminate and sentimental.

For that reason we should seriously bear in mind what my mother once said to me, when I went to church and she asked me who had chanted. I did not know Greek well and I answered that on that day so-and-so 'sang songs'. And she replied: 'Son, we do not sing songs in church. We chant.'

The way the Westerners sing those songs of theirs is heretical. Why is it heretical? Because it distances them from Orthodox spirituality. Someone who adheres to that sort of music will never reach purification, never mind illumination. In order for purification to come about, there has to be a complete foundation of attitudes and dispositions. Someone will go off course with bad music in church. The same happens with iconography. If you put those works of Michelangelo or Leonardo da Vinci in church it is doubtful, to say the least, whether you will go where you ought to go. Architecture plays a very important role in Orthodox theology."

Not only the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils are dogmas but so is the Gospel. If the first three Gospels can be described as catechetical, the Gospel according to John, which speaks of the mysteries of God, "is a mystagogical and dogmatic Gospel".

"The Gospel of John is mainly an apologetic and dogmatic Gospel, for the purpose of enlightenment, as they have passed through the stage of purification as catechumens and are now newly baptised.

It is not by chance that the Gospel of John is read and interpreted from Easter until Pentecost. That is why the Fathers of the Church call this Gospel 'the spiritual Gospel'. It is not for everyone. It is for those who have been baptised..."

We ought also to look at the value of relics in this perspective. When

someone attains to glorification, his body is also glorified and becomes a sacred relic. Relics have a dogmatic character; they are the result of the experience of dogmas.

Unfortunately the dogmas are often used within the Church for political purposes and not for purification, illumination and glorification. We see this in the dispute between Romans and Franks.

> "The basic forces that clashed on the theological battlefield were not the Decretals, Canon Law and the *filioque*, but the Romans and the Franks. The Franks used the structure of the Church and dogma in order to preserve what was, for them, their natural right to keep the Roman nation in 'just subjection'. The Romans also used the structure and dogma to struggle for their freedom and independence.
>
> Both sides used the same weapons in turn, depending on their circumstances and needs. The same arguments from Canon Law and the same Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals are to be found sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other, according to the current defensive needs of each nation. The *filioque*, however, became a decisive and constant weapon in the conflict between Eastern Romans and Franks, with the Western Romans attempting to side with the Eastern Romans."

f) The Development of Dogmas

Anyone reading the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils realises that the terminology is determined, and sometimes changes, according to the polemics of the heretics, in order to deal with the heresies. This is not a matter of development in the understanding of dogma, but of development in the way it is formulated.

> "There is no development in the understanding of dogma. No development in the understanding of dogma is possible. Dogma can never be understood, because dogma is not subject to man's reason, but is lived by the experience of glorification. Then dogma is changed into experience. It becomes experience, it becomes divine vision. Dogma is what can be put into words."

Some people mistakenly assert that the Church, as time passes, penetrates more deeply into the dogmas and understands them better. This is incorrect.

"The ancient terminology of the Church is not very clear. Caution is needed. By studying this terminology, Westerners have reached the conclusion that the early Christians, if not Arians, were at least semi-Arians.

They believe that, as time goes by, the Church reflects more deeply on its doctrine and improves its understanding of dogmas. But they have not paid due attention to what Gregory the Theologian says: 'It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.' As far as Westerners are concerned, we have a better conception and better expression. So with the passage of time, the Church understands its dogmas more profoundly and expresses them with extreme clarity.

If you take the proposals of the Second Vatican Council you will see that they follow this line. On every page you will find this view, that in the course of time the Church has a better understanding. Whereas St Gregory the Theologian tells us that, however perfect someone may be, 'It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.' Although they talk about 'deeper understanding', we can neither understand nor express God."

In Orthodox theology we cannot speak about perfecting the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

"A theologian in Athens talks about perfecting the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He makes it known in Europe, where he frequently travels, that the Fathers have not yet completed the teaching on the Holy Spirit, and now we are going to complete it.

It seems that the man is about to reach glorification, and from his glorified state he is going to perfect dogma as well. He spreads the word, and they quote him – I have seen Protestant textbooks – that the teaching about the Holy Spirit has not yet been rounded off, and now we are going to complete it... When I saw it, I burst out laughing.

There are two Greeks who say that. Also a Russian and a French convert. It is the new heretical teaching about the Holy Spirit. From

there they will conclude that the Fathers, who did not complete the dogma, were also mistaken."

There is an academic discipline concerned with dogmas, which studies their formulation, their history, and what preceded and followed them. It is called the history of dogmas.

Westerners study dogmas and cannot understand about the terminology of dogmas down through the ages. The history of dogmas, therefore, studies the development of the terminology of dogmas.

"This raises the whole subject of the history of dogmas, which basically is a matter of the history of the terminology of dogmas, because new terminologies are added in the history of theology, and sometimes the initial meaning of a terminology changes. There are some words used in the 4th century, which, when they were used in the 1st and 2nd century, did not have the same meaning in theology.

Western theologians do not understand that the meaning of the terminology does not change, but the use of the terminology changes. For the Westerners, a new meaning is added. This led the Western historians after the Reformation to accept that there are serious developments in theology, that the theology of the 1st century is not the same as the theology of the 2nd century. In other words, that theology changes continuously and is transformed.

Between the Papal Christians and the Protestants there have been very major conflicts on this subject. On account of this conflict many people have taken an interest in reading the Fathers on basic dogmas, and we see the beginning of the history of dogmas, the study of patristic texts, because of the polemics of Protestants and Papal Christians."

There are various textbooks on dogmatics by contemporary theologians which apparently do not use the patristic method of interpreting dogmas. These books do not correctly interpret the purpose of dogmas.

"Take any reference books on dogmatics written in the past by Russian, Greek or Romanian theologians, and you will see that their way of theologising is different from the Fathers'. It is doubtful whether anyone reading these dogmatic textbooks would ever attain to glorification. Or even to illumination.

So this contradiction between the practice of the saints and the theology of the theoreticians with regard to the study of dogmatics is not just a problem in the West, but also a problem in the East."

Because non-Orthodox historians of dogma are imbued with this Western interpretation of dogmas, they have a serious problem concerning faith and knowledge. However, even Orthodox theologians who have been influenced by Western theology speak about faith and knowledge.

"These views on the development of understanding of the truth clearly exist in the Orthodox Church. If you read non-Orthodox historians of dogma, you will see that they present the Fathers as men who have the faith of the Church and are trying to elevate this faith of the Church to the level of knowledge.

I do not like speaking about people who are still alive, so I shall not name names, but even some professors of mine, here in Greece, say this. Faith and knowledge. Faith and knowledge according to so-and-so. Everyone is accustomed to writing about faith and knowledge according to the Fathers of the Church. Some were in favour of faith alone, others wanted to change faith into knowledge.

Tertullian was one who did not want us to defile the faith, and he attacked philosophy. Others were in favour of philosophy, and wanted to turn faith into knowledge. Some were illiterate, others educated, and so on. These are caricatures of the patristic tradition, and I am amazed that anyone can treat such serious matters in this childish way. I cannot understand it."

When the Fathers of the Church formulated dogmas, they did not go more deeply into the faith, but articulated the revelatory experience in dogmatic statements in order to safeguard it. There is no development in the faith, which was revealed once and for all, but there is development in the use of terminology.

g) Dogmas and Philosophy

It is very clear from the above that theology is not linked with philosophy, because they are two different paths. Theology is based on theoria (vision) of God, whereas philosophy is based on human reason,

speculation. The holy Fathers of the Church were theologians who beheld God, not philosophers. When they formulated dogmas, they did not do so in a philosophical way, or in order to understand them or to develop philosophy.

> "The assertion by many historians that the Fathers of the Church used philosophy in order to understand dogmas, and that the conflict between Orthodox and heretics was about who had the correct rational understanding of dogma, is a myth. The Fathers of the Church never had this perception. The heretics had this perception."

The Fathers of the Church did not speculate; they knew the dogmas. Logical processes are gymnastics for the mind and are unconnected with the experience of Orthodox theology. If Orthodox theology were based on syllogisms and logic, the best theologians from the point of view of Orthodox theology would be the professors of dogmatics and the history of dogmas.

> "When someone really digests the statement, 'It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him,' he also gains a good understanding of the efforts of contemporary theologians.
>
> Theology students have been given the impression that the university professor of dogmatics or history of dogmas, being very intelligent and having studied philosophy, logic and so on, is someone with a profound mind who conceives God and dogmas. Therefore when he says, 'one essence, three hypostases', he understands it. All these professors ignore Gregory the Theologian's words, 'It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.'"

Dogma cannot be approached from a metaphysical angle. In Western theology metaphysics dominated even in dogmatic issues, which is why Western dogmatics was not successful.

> "It is impossible to approach dogma about God and the subject of perfection through metaphysics."
>
> "In the West, since metaphysics was predominant, they thought that metaphysics was independent of success. The Americans have identified truth with success. Whatever is successful is true. If something is unsuccessful, it is not true.

Metaphysics may be true without having any success. This truth is independent of success. Orthodox people who followed this line also made a metaphysical approach to theological issues and suffered the same fate. They think of dogmas as metaphysical phenomena, as metaphysical realities, which have no connection with the meaning of success, and are something separate from success. They are truths in themselves."

The holy Fathers, however, were not metaphysical philosophers, so it is impossible for the Orthodox tradition to be interpreted through metaphysics.

"The Fathers of the Church do not accept metaphysics, because metaphysics is human thought about 'the immutable'. By means of concepts and words, man thinks about and expresses 'the immutable'. That is the foundation of metaphysics.

In patristic theology, however, we have the famous saying of Gregory the Theologian, the compass for every Orthodox theologian, which tells us, 'It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.' We can neither describe God in words nor understand Him. For that reason words and concepts about God do not "express" God. They are simply part of the ascetic means by which man attains, if he ever does attain, to glorification.

The fact that dogma is temporary removes all metaphysical meaning from Orthodox theology. Metaphysics cannot be founded upon Orthodox tradition. For the same reason the philosophical approach to theology is completely foreign to the Orthodox tradition."

Western theology was closely connected with metaphysics, so there was a serious reaction against it from the Enlightenment.

"The main feature of the French Enlightenment, apart from Voltaire, was its opposition to metaphysics: the anti-metaphysical orientation of the French Enlightenment. The French Enlightenment, at least in its final state, what it led to, was an attempt to stop anyone accepting dogmas which have their basis somewhere in heaven, out of human sight. Instead, the verification of the truth should come from man's experience, from the experience of knowledge."

This does not happen in the Orthodox Church, which regards dogmas as expressions of experience and not metaphysical speculations.

In Orthodox theology dogmas are the fruit of the experience of glorification and signposts pointing the way to glorification. In the West, by contrast, dogmas are linked with speculation, and dogma and mystery are regarded as identical.

> "Augustine is the only Orthodox theologian of the early Church who confused dogma and mystery, and believed that it was possible to understand the mystery by means of dogma. For the Fathers of the Church, on the contrary, dogma does not lead to comprehension of the mystery, but to union with the mystery. And this mystery, even in union, goes beyond all human categories."

Augustine identified theology with philosophy. The dogma of the Holy Trinity is also regarded as part of natural revelation, whereas the dogma concerning the incarnation belongs to supernatural revelation.

> "Augustine believed that theology is like philosophy, that it is a speculative attempt by man to conceive the truth. So we have the truth from philosophy. For Augustine, the dogma of the Holy Trinity was not part of supernatural revelation, as you see, since the Platonists had it. What was part of the supernatural revelation was the incarnation of Christ, the Word of God. The incarnation, the doctrine of divine grace and the doctrine of the Fall and sin: these constitute the specific form of supernatural revelation, whereas the dogma of the Holy Trinity belongs to natural revelation.
>
> As time passed, however, in the Western tradition – this view of Platonists and so on – it began to be considered in the Middle Ages that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was also part of the supernatural revelation. This means – and you will see in the neo-scholastic textbooks of the Papal Church, particularly from the dogmatic standpoint – that they no longer write in the same way. You see that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is part of the supernatural revelation and no longer of the natural revelation."

Augustine also puts faith first, followed by knowledge. He said that we accept dogmas in order to understand them and learn the truth through the process of rational thought.

"In the penultimate chapter of *Contra Academicos*, which is a summary of all the others, he tells us the most important fact: that we are now convinced that we believe 'that we might know the truth'. I believe in order to understand.

The basic presupposition of all the scholastic theology of the Middle Ages is that, in order to understand the truth, someone must first accept the truth by faith. Once he has accepted the truth or the dogma by faith, he then makes an effort through reasoning and afterwards he actually understands."

The Western tradition maintains that, by means of the philosophical method and profound reasoning, we can understand the dogmas of faith. This runs counter to the Orthodox tradition, where dogmas are the fruit of experience, not human axioms aimed at leading us to rational understanding.

"This method of Augustine's, that on the basis of faith, assisted by the philosophical method and profound reflection, we shall come to understand the dogmas of the Church, became the basic method of the Frankish tradition in the West.

This view of the patristic tradition is in all the textbooks – as far as I know and have been able to check – in all the textbooks here in Greece from high school up to university. They constantly follow this line: that faith must be changed into knowledge, into understanding, and this is achieved with the help of philosophy.

Here, modern Greek theology, due to modern Greek patriotism along the lines drawn up by Korais, put the purist form of the Greek language and philosophy at the heart of Greek education in the early years. It was considered indispensable for a theologian, particularly a systematic or dogmatic theologian, to have mastered philosophy, so that he could ponder correctly on the dogmas of the faith. In the patristic tradition, however, we have purification, we have illumination and afterwards we have glorification."

In addition to this mistaken method, in which faith precedes knowledge, the Church is regarded as the authority instead of the glorified Fathers, as we encounter in the Orthodox tradition.

"Augustine put faith first and knowledge comes afterwards. The

fundamental presupposition of Augustine is that man cannot know the truth through his reason alone, but his reason must first know the truth through faith. Faith comes first. Someone accepts the dogmas by faith, and after that he understands the dogmas. So faith comes before knowledge.

In this way another curious theory of Augustine's developed. Why do we accept dogmas? Because they are the Church's dogmas, they are the teaching of the Church. For Augustine, the authority for their acceptance is the Church.

It is the first time that this perception appears. Whereas for us this perception does not exist. For us it is the Fathers, not the Church. The Church for us is not an abstract idea, which is an organised, ecclesiastical, hierarchical authority. For us it is 'those who have experience'; the glorified are the reason why we accept the dogmas. The glorified, who have direct knowledge about God, are the foundation of our own faith. Those of us who do not have knowledge about God accept the teaching of those who have knowledge.

The same happens as in astronomy. Not all of us have looked through telescopes and seen the heavenly bodies. There are, however, astronomers who have done so. They describe things to us and even take photographs for us. We open a book on astronomy and, having confidence in the experience of the astronomers, we read all these things and accept them, since we are sure of the trustworthiness of these people.

In the same way, we have God-seers, who have beheld God, and we too accept what these people have said about God, until the time when we too, perhaps, may reach that state. Then we shall have the same experience and the same teaching again."

We also find in Augustine that he uses psychological terms for the Holy Trinity.

"If anyone wants to do an analysis of Augustine's book *De Trinitate*, it is a curious account. The significant thing is that the basic method used by Augustine – he was the first to undertake a psychoanalysis of the Holy Trinity – was to take humanistic psychology, Neoplatonic in this case, in order to investigate the dogma of the Holy Trinity and reflect more deeply upon it.

He makes comparisons between God and the human nous, memory and reason in order to understand the dogma of the Holy Trinity in a psychological way. We see scholastic theology deriving from this. Instead of occupying themselves with asceticism, they sat at their desks and devised theory and philosophical theory about the Holy Trinity. They thought that the great task of theologians was to sit and try to understand dogmas and understand God, the essence of God. Thus the great universities of Europe were built in the monasteries.

h) The Therapeutic Nature of Dogma as a Basis for Dialogue with other Confessions

There are dialogues nowadays between the Orthodox Church and other Christian Confessions to find common points for union. There was a dogmatic basis for the secession of Western Christians from the Church, but there were also political and military differences, as theology is connected with history.

"We have all this history, which unfortunately also has a theological foundation, because often, as I have found in my research, in order to find the source of a dogmatic conflict, you have to trace back political and military disputes. The cause of a theological dispute is often not theology but politics. Dogmatic disputes may be created for the sole purpose of salvaging a political situation. We clearly see this phenomenon developing here.

I told you about the Council of Frankfurt that condemned the Seventh Ecumenical Council, and about the Council that condemned those who refused to accept the addition of the *filioque* to the Creed.

So the Franks condemn us for heresies on two counts. We did not make any accusations against them on dogmatic grounds during that period. They began accusing us as heretics for reasons of their own."

The dialogues between the Orthodox Church and the other Christian Confessions need to be based not only on the dogmas of the Ecumen-

ical Councils, but mainly on the essence and purpose of the dogmas, which is curing people.

"When someone has such criteria, he can face the issues of dialogue with other Churches. Relations with the non-Orthodox should be regulated on a therapeutic, not a dogmatic, basis.

The basis is shifted from dogma to treatment. Why? Because dogma is a therapeutic medicine and medicine is used in the case of illness. When health returns and the illness departs, however, medicine goes. The patient stops taking medicine. Dogma is abolished in the same way. Thus the basis of discussion in dialogues ought not to be dogma. It should be treatment.

Whenever there is a discussion on dogma, it needs to be investigated within its purely therapeutic context. This is of great significance, because when we discuss with non-Orthodox, the conservative Orthodox, who see no connection between dogma and treatment, and do not realise that dogma has a purely therapeutic aim, tell the non-Orthodox to accept all the Orthodox dogmas so that unity can come about. The non-Orthodox Christian – and the poor soul is right – asks, 'Why are all these dogmas necessary? What is the point of my formally accepting all these dogmas that you acknowledge?' Because our own old-fashioned conservative, who represents the Orthodox Church today, is a victim of the Greek Revolution and a spiritual child of Adamantios Korais and the only thing he says is: 'Accept all the dogmas of the seven Ecumenical Councils so that there can be unity.'

Of course there is not such a problem with the Latins on this subject, as they accept the seven Ecumenical Councils. The problem is that they accept much more than the seven Ecumenical Councils accept. So the problem turns against us not against them. We say seven Ecumenical Councils and they say, 'Fine, we agree.'

For the Protestants, however, there is a problem. They ask why they should accept seven Ecumenical Councils. Because at the time of the Protestant Reformation they accepted four Ecumenical Councils. At that time they did not accept the Fifth, Sixth or Seventh Ecumenical Councils. They identified the Seventh with the statues in the Papal Church and what they regarded as superstitions of that

Church. They rejected the Seventh Ecumenical Council. That leaves the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils.

So they say, 'Why should we accept these dogmas? They are very metaphysical and come from Greek philosophy. They belong to a later, debased spiritual state. What connection do they have with Holy Scripture? How do they relate to man's salvation?' They have many doubts about the Fifth and Sixth Ecumenical Councils."

Unless the significance of dogma is examined and linked with its therapeutic purpose, theological dialogue between Confessions creates a serious problem.

"In discussions, the Orthodox usually suggest a formal acceptance of the Ecumenical Councils, but without explaining to the Protestants why these dogmas of all the Ecumenical Councils are necessary. This is because for Western historians of dogma, as also for modern Orthodox historians of dogma, dogma has been severed from its therapeutic purpose and is now identified with a metaphysical and ontological perception of the dogmas of the Church, as if it were the case that the Fathers began philosophising about the faith of the Church. And the result of this philosophy concerning the faith was the development of dogmas, which were formulated from then on by Ecumenical Councils. We live in an era when modern people are no longer willing to accept a dogma of the Church, just because the Church teaches a certain dogma.

There are doubtless some Latin and Orthodox theologians who make this demand. There are some Anglicans who accept this demand and comply with it, because they have this sort of theological training, which is also typical of many Latin and Orthodox theologians. The Anglicans too have this tendency. Among other Protestants, however, there is no such tendency."

Some contemporary Orthodox have cut dogma off from the piety of the Church and its therapeutic character. For that reason they do not use the therapeutic purpose of dogma as a basis for dialogue.

"In this context of historical research, the whole wretched state of contemporary Orthodox theology lies in the fact that the Orthodox themselves no longer regard dogma as a therapeutic means

and see it as something cut off from the piety of the Church, from diagnosis and treatment.

This is the state of things. This is without doubt the most important aspect of the matter. But fortunately, at least in two dialogues, there is now an official decision to follow this path and to examine dogmas from a therapeutic perspective. I hope that this will bear fruit."

i) How Dogma is Linked with Ethics and Ascetic Teaching

There is an extraordinary link between dogma and ethics. Theology and dogma can never be separated from the ethical teaching of the Church, which is ascetic.

"The strange thing is that in practice the Orthodox today separate dogmatics from ethics and we have become very much involved in moralising. There is a tendency for some people to concern themselves with ethics and others with dogmatics. They clearly separate these issues.

It is obvious from Orthodox ascetic teaching that theology can never be separated from ethics. Asceticism has a purely dogmatic character, because it concerns the correct evaluation of concepts. Someone must know exactly what these concepts are, what type they are, and what relationship they bear to the reality that they symbolise or express."

We see this in the history of the Church. Many people accept dogma in order to be saved, but they do not observe the ethical teaching connected with the dogma.

"But what connection does this dogma – the Holy Trinity, the incarnation, all these things – what connection does the dogma of the Holy Trinity have with man's therapeutic treatment?

The view prevailed that the dogma exists and we ought to believe the dogma so as not to go to Hell. God is such that, unless we accept the dogma, even though we are good people, unless we accept a particular Orthodox or Papal or some other dogma, we shall go to Hell. God punishes us for not believing correctly in dogmas.

> Here the relationship between dogma and the practice of the Church was no longer visible. Ethics was something different from dogma. There was ethics and there was dogma. What saves is ethics, but if ethics is not linked with dogma it does not save. We ought to have both ethics and dogma to be saved."

In this context moralism develops. If dogma is separated from ethics, on the one hand speculation prevails and, on the other, moralism.

As we shall see below, Orthodox ethics is not humanistic and its effect is not limited simply to man's outward behaviour. It is ascetic, and asceticism is clearly dogmatic in character, "because it concerns the correct evalutaion of concepts". More about this subject will be emphasised in the following section.

In conclusion, dogma, as has been stressed many times, is the fruit of an empirical revelation granted to the saints and subsequently leads human beings to glorification. Even when God reveals Himself to man, His essence remains incommunicable and therefore unknowable. With regard to His essence, He remains a mystery. It is, however, possible to share in Him and know Him according to His energies. The God-seer, when necessary, formulates dogmas to safeguard the experience and to guide the faithful without error.

2. Ethics

In all philosophical and religious systems, apart from the theories, there is also the practical application of these theories. This is called ethics, and concerns the basic principles determining human life and societies.

Since the Fall of man and the loss of communion with God, man is dominated by the passions, since his nous is darkened. Everyone pursues his individual security and dominance. Since everyone in society wants to dominate, some limits have to be set to ensure equilibrium. In addition, philosophical and religious systems establish certain preconditions to enable people to achieve their aims. This is how ethics evolved.

Many people maintain that this also applies in Christianity. They refer to Christian ethics. Things are not so simple. In the Orthodox Church ethics means something clearly different and does not resemble the ethical teaching of the various anthropocentric systems.

a) Philosophical, Religious and Social Ethics

Every philosophy also has its ethics. Classical examples are the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, who attempted through their ethics to apply their philosophical theories. We see that to this day.

> "We have ethical systems, because the unfortunate ancients attempted to find support in philosophy to uphold their social regimes and systems, so they could have social order and political order, which are rewarded according to certain systems in both this life and the next."

There is also ethics as a branch of philosophy, which has no connection at all with Orthodox theology.

> "If you look at it from the point of view of philosophical ethics,

there are many good people who live correctly but have nothing to do with Christianity. There are many good people who are not even Christians, who are not interested in purification, illumination and glorification, not interested in being good people. Someone who goes through purification and illumination is not simply a good human being. He is something far beyond that."

During the period of the Enlightenment the foundations of metaphysics were shattered, as no one can assert that the Platonic ideas exist. As a consequence, the foundations of philosophical ethics, which were based on philosophical ideas, were also shattered. "After the destruction of the metaphysical foundations, a sort of moralistic teaching remained."

Science has proved nowadays that immutable criteria do not exist, contrary to what metaphysics used to say. As a consequence philosophical ethics also collapsed. Thus the ethical teaching that one way or another ought to exist has no foundations, no firm bases. So every human being or every society creates their own ethics.

"In recent years the belief that an immutable criterion exists has been utterly condemned. Thus the old metaphysical foundations of the law are no longer acceptable in Europe and America. Positivism prevails today in the Anglo-Saxon world. And in Europe the only philosophy in existence today is existentialism.

Existentialism rejects the idea of the immutable essence that could be a moral or legal rule. So we have this curious phenomenon whereby, although there is no unchanging criterion for law or ethics, everybody is invited to invent some aim for himself in life and to make every effort to reach that goal. Everyone determines something for himself from the ethical, legal and social point of view, and is asked to act altruistically and heroically, living the life of a good human being."

This also happens in religious systems. There are people involved in Eastern philosophy, Hindus, who are good people from the ethical standpoint.

"There are Hindus who are extremely good people from the ethical point of view, decent people, nothing more. Also, it (medita-

tion) brings them relief, psychological relief. It is beneficial to them, calms them down. They are not acquisitive. They become sincere. A good human being, a good citizen."

Muslims, even atheists who believe in no God at all, can have excellent outward conduct and lead ethical lives. This sort of ethics does not save man.

"What fruit will Christians of different Confessions have in common? The only fruit they will have in common is ethics. But this ethical order will not only be shared by two Christians. A Muslim and a Christian may also share it. Because there are Muslims who are very good and honest people.

There are situations in which you can trust certain Muslims more than you can trust certain Orthodox, from the point of view of their ethical level. You can have a Muslim friend who always tells you the truth, and an Orthodox friend who continually tells you lies. Which of the two is morally better? The one who tells lies or the one who tells the truth?

There are atheists who in their ethical life surpass many Christians. On the other hand, there are Christians, who cannot be compared with that atheist. There are a large number of atheist idealists, just as there are Christian idealists.

If ethics is the criteria for ethical life, and we separate dogma from ethics, we end up saying that these people will go to Hell because they are not Orthodox in dogma. But look how ethical they are! As they are ethical, why should they not go to Paradise as well? Is it only the ethical Orthodox who will go to Paradise? Do ethical heretics, people of other religions and atheists not go too, as they are ethical? If ethics is the criteria, this creates a problem concerning who will go to Paradise and who will not go to Paradise."

There is also pharisaic type of ethics, when people perform all the outward actions - fasting, self-control - but their inner world is untransformed.

"There are people who are highly ethical, at the very height of morality, who may have mortified themselves with fasts and so on, but they have a terrible, pharisaic nous."

This pharisaic approach to ethics was condemned by Christ, as we see in the corresponding parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee. What is needed is not an outwardly ethical life, which degenerates into moralising, but repentance as man's cure.

> "Someone who is concerned with ethics may do everything laid down by the law and still have a hardened conscience. Instead of taking the path of the tax collector he may take the path of the Pharisee.
>
> It is not only ethics that is needed, but something more than ethics. Repentance is also necessary. And repentance does not simply mean going to the confessor to tell him what I have done, which sins I have committed. It is not just that. Repentance means going through repentance, to progress from purification to illumination. If I do not arrive at illumination, I am not ready to see the glory of God."

This is the reason why Orthodox theology does not restrict itself to philosophical, religious and social ethics. It is not possible for man's destiny to be limited to ethics.

> "Nowadays they identify the experience of theology with ethics. Yes, but theology is not ethics. The experience of theology is noetic prayer and glorification, not ethics. Orthodox theology does not have ethics, it has asceticism. Orthodox ethics does not exist. There is pagan ethics, which is not virtue and is not part of Orthodoxy, but belongs to the whole world. The experience of theology is not virtue, ethics, because ethics also belongs to the philosophers. That is why I emphasised the other day that it also belonged to the ancients."

Other humanistic and sociological movements also have ethics, such as communism, which promises equality and shared ownership, and has better ethics than capitalism. Even the atheism of communism is no different from the atheism of religions, even of some Christians. Because when someone does not have personal knowledge of God and does not know God, he actually believes in a non-existent God, the god of his imagination.

> "Do the communists not have virtue? Do they not have ethics? Of course they have virtue, and of course they have ethics. Today

the communists often have far superior ethics on many issues to the capitalists. This is a fact. Their own perceptions are superior to those of the capitalists on many subjects. Here too we should face the facts.

So, we do not like it, because they are atheists. I agree that we should be severe with them on the subject of atheism, but where they do something good, we cannot be hard on them. That is the reality. But as I have stressed, how are they different from the Orthodox even in their atheism? I have stressed that too. Because the reason they are atheists is exactly the same reason why Orthodoxy used to maintain until today or yesterday or the day before, that the gods of the other religions do not exist. Why? Read any communist book you like. You will see there very well developed arguments why the gods of the various religions do not exist.

There in their argumentation, however, the God of Orthodoxy is not included. Why? Because they do not know the God of Orthodoxy. Because the Orthodox do not believe in God for the same reasons that the others believe in their fantasies."

Unfortunately even in Greece Orthodoxy has become associated with an 'ethical religion'.

"Contemporary Orthodoxy in Greece has become identified with an ethical system. Philosophy is also very much liked for that reason. Because the most philosophy could possibly do is to give us certain systems of ethics, be they Platonic or Stoic or whatever.

When the Greek Revolution took place, the fathers of the nation, led by Adamantios Korais, decided to abolish Orthodoxy as an ascetic religion, as it had been until then, and to make it an 'ethical religion', which would be good for the middle class, the Paris bourgeoisie, and help the police to make good citizens. That was what happened."

The problem, therefore, is not simply ethics, which is to be found in other religious, philosophical and social systems, but asceticism, which leads to true theology and is inspired by it. The essential points of difference between ethics and asceticism will be set out in a later section.

b) Christian Ethics

Like all philosophical and religious systems, Christianity, which was revealed by Christ, has its own practical application of the truths of the faith. The word 'Christian' is used for all the Confessions. The Orthodox Church safeguards the revealed truth, so it is regarded as the historic Church. It is the Orthodox Catholic Church, whereas the other Christian Confessions have diversified in dogma and ethics.

Whereas in Orthodox teaching, as we shall see below, what is called ethics is actually asceticism, in the other Confessions, ethics has become a matter of external moralistic teaching. Reference is made to Christian ethics. Western Christian metaphysics was based on Aristotle, who spoke about virtues. Thus in the West Christian ethics developed, which is complete different from what exists in the Orthodox Church and what we find in Holy Scripture and the writings of the Fathers of the Church.

> "The Frankish theologians had followed Aristotle so closely that Aristotle's teaching about virtues became the ethics of the Papal Church, and subsequently of many Protestant traditions. Orthodox ascetic teaching was abolished among the Franks and replaced by moralistic teaching, by ethics. So the work of divine grace is continuously to help man to become virtuous, to acquire the virtues, as these were taught by the classical Greek philosophers.
>
> This is why the chair of dogmatics and ethics was established at the University of Athens. The same professor who taught dogmatics was obliged to teach ethics as well. Why? Because Thomas Aquinas, the greatest dogmatist of the Western tradition of all the centuries, teaches both dogmatics and ethics in the *Summa Theologica.* It is ethics and moralistic teaching that have now been repudiated by the whole of Europe. Modern people nowadays cannot accept this ethical teaching from any Western theologian or philosopher. Why? Because all the foundations of ethics have been demolished. That is why there are hippies in Europe and America."

This moralistic teaching affected not only Western monasticism but the entire Christian life.

"In the Frankish tradition, for instance, someone who was a prostitute can never become a nun. This is a curious irregularity. Perhaps someone ought to do a thesis to see the theological context of this difference between our traditions.

In the Western tradition there is a great deal of moralistic teaching, because they have been very much influenced by the classical Greek philosophers. The evil demons of scholastic philosophy are the ancient Greek philosophers. And because they were enticed by them, the poor Franks suffered terribly."

Naturally the same applies here as we mentioned earlier, that once metaphysics had collapsed in the West, during the Enlightenment, it was inevitable that the ethical teaching based on metaphysics would also collapse.

"In the Frankish tradition, metaphysics was the backbone of the knowledge of the truth, on the one hand, and of law and ethics, on the other. Ideas about truth, law and ethics were based on metaphysics.

So when metaphysics was demolished, Christian ethics began to be demolished by the philosophers of the eighteenth century. The demolition was completed with the appearance of Darwin's theory of evolution. More recent astronomy, particularly from the beginning of this century, also destroyed metaphysics. No one who is serious accepts it."

The views of blessed Augustine played a significant role in shaping moralistic teaching and ethics in the West.

"In the Augustinian tradition sin appeared in an ethical form, whereas in the Fathers of the Church it takes the form of illness, and the eradication of sin takes the form of treatment. So we have sickness and cure."

Blessed Augustine did not know the Orthodox ascetic tradition as it is expressed by the neptic theology of the Fathers of the Church.

"Augustine has no idea about noetic prayer, the heart, the nous and so on. He has an ethical perception of man, with the difference that man cannot do good works without God's grace. This is a variation on the patristic teaching that only when man has noetic

prayer and becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit can he do things correctly, because he has love that '*does not seek its own*', and develops in unselfish love, and as a consequence he does his works well. That is why the works of the Pharisee are unacceptable to God, because they are ethical works. They are not works that come from unselfishness."

In the Orthodox Church, Christian ethics, as encountered in Western theology, does not exist. The Fathers of the Church were spiritual physicians, who cured human beings. They write from a medical perspective.

"Spiritual fathers are doctors. They are not moralistic fathers whose role is to uphold people's ethics on behalf of the Greek Government, so that we may have better Greek citizens. This is not the aim of Orthodox spiritual life.

That is why I emphasise to students that there is no Orthodox ethics and Christian ethics does not exist for us. The fact that we established chairs of Christian ethics is a proof of how far we had strayed from Orthodoxy."

At some period in history Western Christian ethics was brought to Greece as well and replaced Orthodox ascetic teaching. This secularised form of ethics was taught in the past in Theological Schools.

"With the modern Greek theology in the University of Athens, which those professors who had studied in Russia and Germany knew – they were the most highly educated theologians, they knew better than those illiterates – what did they teach us in their role as professors? Christian ethics and a theology without purification, illumination and glorification. What did they put in place of purification, illumination and glorification? Purification became deliverance from moral failings, from the ethical point of view."

"With the foundation of the Greek state and the war against the monasteries and monks, against monasticism in general, a subject called 'Christian ethics' was introduced for the first time into Orthodox theology.

Christian ethics does not exist. In Orthodox theology there is ascetic teaching, which concerns therapeutic treatment. It is not ethics

in the sense of philosophical ethics, which dominated the Franks for so many centuries and later the Russians as well. There is nothing of the sort, that you are good or bad: if you are a good boy you will go to Heaven, but if you are a bad boy you will go to Hell. This sort of approach does not exist in the writings of the Fathers of the Church.

What does exist? There is ascetic teaching, the science of therapeutic treatment, in order that man's noetic faculty (energy) may be cured and differentiated from his rational faculty, that a faculty may function within man, which has remained inactive, or has been occupied with activities inappropriate to man's destiny."

c) Orthodox Ethics as Ascetic Teaching

In contrast to Western Christianity, there is no mention in the Fathers of the Church of autonomous ethical or moralistic teaching connected with an outward improvement in life. They mainly refer to asceticism.

First and foremost, as we have mentioned, what is referred to as ethics is linked with dogmatics. It does not depend on philosophical and metaphysical ideas but on revealed truths.

> "It is plainly obvious here that, from the point of view of anthropological structure, there is a particular perception of the function of the human personality that is certainly similar in character to ethics, but instead of being ethical it is ascetical."

Reading the patristic texts we clearly discern that the Fathers of the Church did not accept ethics, as the term is understood today. When they used this term in what are called their ethical writings, they were actually referring to ascetic teaching. They assigned great importance to man's nous, which is distinct from his rational faculty and is the eye of the soul.

> "The Fathers do not accept ethics. Ethics does not exist in the Fathers of the Church. I do not mean that the Fathers teach unethical behaviour, but what we call ethics nowadays is called ascetic teaching by the Fathers.

Well, for the Fathers of the Church there are two kinds of people. There are those whose nous is darkened and, because their nous is darkened, they have the appearance of immoral people, those we call bad people today, unethical people. But the Fathers understand it as darkening of the nous. And there are those whose nous is illumined."

Ascetic teaching centres, therefore, on the illuminated or darkened nous, and not simply on man's outward behaviour.

"What is the purpose of asceticism? The purpose of asceticism is extremely simple. Read all the troparia, read the service of Baptism, read the Church's troparia for Holy Week, for the whole period from Easter up to Pentecost. Read all the liturgical books carefully. What is the aim? The aim is purification and illumination of the nous.

And something else. Christianity exists for the sole purpose of taking human beings through purification and leading them to illumination. Does Baptism have any other aim? This is the aim. There is no other aim."

Every system of ethics has different criteria for defining what is ethical and what is unethical. Something different happens in Orthodoxy.

"You cannot base an ethical system on the fact that one thing is ethical and another thing is unethical. It has nothing to do with ethics from that point of view. Orthodox ethics does not exist. Only ascetic teaching exists."

The criteria in the Orthodox tradition are ascetical. This justifies the sudden transformation of prostitutes and tax collectors. The service of Great and Holy Tuesday says of the woman who was a prostitute: "The woman who before was prodigal is **suddenly** seen to be chaste, hating the works of shameful sin." This is a change that takes place by the grace of God.

"There is a sense of history in our tradition, which is not based on ethical criteria but on ascetical criteria. Someone, who may be completely sunk in one sort of sin or another, all of a sudden changes and becomes a saint of the Church.

We have many examples of this in Orthodoxy. To see the differ-

ence here, look at the fact that in our Church a prostitute can become a nun, and is actually welcome to do so."

In any case, the Fall of man was not ethical but actual. It contributed to the corruption of the whole human being and even affected creation. The Fall is expressed as darkening of the nous and as deprivation *"of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23).

"Many people nowadays understand the Fall as an ethical fall, whereas, when St Symeon the New Theologian speaks of falls he does not mean ethical falls, because St Symeon the New Theologian is not concerned with ethics.

St Symeon the New Theologian is an ascetic. He teaches asceticism not ethics. He thinks ascetically and not ethically. He means that people have now become bishops who do not have noetic prayer. That is what he means. So they are like the laypeople in earlier times, who did not yet have noetic prayer, who were newly baptised, but not yet illuminated."

St Symeon the New Theologian speaks about glorification, not about some kind of ethics.

"St Symeon the New Theologian says that, in order for someone to become a bishop, he must have made theology into experience. Now we read this and think that by making theology into experience he means that we become good children. Everyone who sees these words today equates the experience of theology with ethics. Yes, but this experience is not a matter of ethics. The experience of theology is noetic prayer and glorification, not ethics."

When St Symeon the New Theologian refers to the fact that the clergy have fallen, he is not simply thinking of moral transgressions, but means that they have perceptibly lost the grace of God.

"St Symeon the New Theologian does not mean that the priests and bishops have become unethical scoundrels with bad reputations..."

Thus ethics cannot be separated from the dogma of the Church and is purely ascetic. Christian ethics as it prevailed in the West is markedly different from ascetic teaching.

"None of the Fathers of the Church was a philosopher and their method of theology – noetic prayer and so on – was clearly opposed to rationalism. Ascetic teaching was not ethics. There is a great difference between ethics and asceticism. They are not the same thing. Ascetic training is therapeutic, whereas ethics does not help in any way. Ethics leads to Hell in the end. I do not mean that someone should be immoral, not in that sense.

Orthodox ethics is ascetical; it is not based on philosophy. It has no connection with philosophical ethics. Nor with the religious ethics of Western Christians, scholastic or Protestant. It has nothing at all to do with that phenomenon. In Orthodoxy the worst human being can be cleansed and attain to illumination."

Ascetic training can never be converted into ethics, because it is based on treating the whole human personality. Orthodox asceticism bears some resemblance to the method of contemporary psychiatry, but its approach and purpose are different.

"Teaching subjects in a moralistic way is completely different from offering therapeutic treatment through the Orthodox tradition. That is why I have stressed for many years now that there is no Orthodox ethics, only ascetic teaching.

Orthodox ascetic teaching can very well be described as spiritual psychiatry, for the very simple reason that the energy of the nous or the heart, where the Holy Spirit prays, is a natural state for man. It is a natural part of the human personality, not something alien to it. Man has the natural ability to receive this prayer in the place of the heart."

Since man's aim is to attain to unselfish love after being delivered from self-love, the problem is not ethical but therapeutic.

"It is clear from Holy Scripture that the destination man has to reach is unselfish love. Is this problem an ethical or a therapeutic one? Will he get there by means of ethical asceticism or therapeutic asceticism?"

The problem is surely therapeutic not ethical, in the sense in which ethics is understood today.

In the Orthodox Church we do not find mere ethical systems, but a therapeutic method, setting out ways in which people are cured. These are not, of course, external means, but ways of co-operation between God and man, as grace acts and man collaborates.

We are referring to purification, illumination and glorification. This therapeutic journey will be analysed elsewhere, but it will be briefly identified here, in order to define in a few words what we mean by asceticism. Asceticism is identical to the therapeutic method and the opposite of the Christian ethics that can found in other Christian Confessions.

According to the Fathers, human beings are not categorised as 'ethical' and 'unethical', 'moral' and 'immoral', 'pious' and 'impious' according to anthropocentric and moralistic criteria.

> "We continually encounter the problem that there are many people with pious intentions, who either act piously, or speak about piety and ethics, and divide people into 'good' and 'bad'.
>
> In the Orthodox tradition humankind is not divided into good and bad, moral and immoral people. Such a thing is unheard of in the Orthodox Church. In the Orthodox Church there are stages of perfection. Not moral and immoral, good and bad."

Some people have changed Orthodoxy into an ethical system for the improvement and strengthening of society, which co-operates with the police for better social conditions.

> "They tried to turn Orthodoxy into an ethical religion. That is the heart of the matter. They said that the work of the Church was to help preventively. The Church was Prometheus and the police Epimetheus. The Church would try to create good citizens and the police would sit and check if they really had become good citizens.
>
> In this way an Orthodoxy was created which was very like the Orthodoxy in Russia, which can only stand with the help of the army and the police."

In general, dogma is connected with ethics and, to be precise, with human morals. The Orthodox Church does not simply have ethics, as can be seen in philosophical, religious and Western Christian systems.

It has ascetic teaching. Through Orthodox ascetic teaching, which is derived from Orthodox dogma and means purification and illumination, man experiences dogma. Dogma becomes experience and man attains to glorification. Orthodox asceticism is a collaboration between the human being and the uncreated energy of God.

Part 2

The Experience of Revelation

The Experience of Revelation

God, as the Orthodox Church teaches, is not subject to the processes of human reason. He is not discovered by man, but reveals Himself in man's heart.

Christ prayed to His Father saying, *"I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight"* (Matt. 11:25-26). The wise and prudent are unable to know God through their wisdom and understanding, as knowledge is revealed in the heart of the humble. *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"* (Matt. 5:8). Christ said to the Apostle Peter, who confessed that He was the Son of the Living God, *"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 16:17).

Because the Apostle Paul was sure that his teaching was a revelation of Christ, he writes, *"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (Gal. 1:11-12). God revealed His Son in him (Gal. 1:15-16). In fact St Paul refers to several such revelations (2 Cor. 12:1ff.). In general, the truth concerning God is a revelation of God Himself to the saints down through the centuries. "The revelation is the experience of glorification."

In the following chapters various points will be emphasised from the important issues relating to the experience of revelation.

1. The Value of Experience

When we read the writings of the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers we realise that they are full of the experiences of these saints. In fact they express and put into words the experiences that they had acquired. These were visitations of the Holy Spirit to them, visitations linked with prayer and the vision of the glory of God.

> "The glorified saint is in the state which the Church calls the spiritual state of visitation of the Holy Spirit, during which man has the Holy Spirit praying within him."

This is an experience of noetic prayer, which comes about through the energy of the Holy Spirit. It is also possible, however, for someone who has noetic prayer to reach the experience of *theosis* or glorification, when he truly becomes a God-seer and a theologian within the Church.

> "The experience of glorification for us is the foundation of theology, because this experience is not a matter of thinking, but an experience that goes beyond thinking."

The experience of glorification is not simply emotional and linked with the soul or psyche. It is psychosomatic, as in the Holy Spirit the whole human being, made up of both soul and body, shares in the experience but is also transformed by it.

> "The experience of glorification includes the whole man, not only the soul but the body as well. We have glorification of the soul – of the rational faculty and the nous – and of the body. We also have glorification and purification of the passions.
>
> As the whole man shares in this experience of glorification, we also have sacred relics, which are the result of the experience of glorification. So the evidence for the experience, for the fact that someone has reached glorification, is the sacred relics that he leaves us."

The experience of glorification "pervades the whole of human nature as the whole man shares in this experience". When someone sees God, then "his reason and his eyes and his nose and his mouth and the whole of him share in this experience and he is not in some kind of speechless state. It is not an experience of being struck dumb, because that sort of experience is Neoplatonic. The Neoplatonists' experience of speechlessness is regarded as being demonic in the Orthodox patristic tradition."

This is why the experience of the holy Fathers is of very great value. The holy Fathers were "initiated by experience" into divine things, so they had characteristic features in common. In fact, when they were putting theological truth into words, they often called upon the personal experience that they possessed. For that reason the patristic tradition is supremely empirical and not speculative. We see in the writings of the holy Fathers that they use the Greek word *peira* for 'experience', which has special significance.

> "The word 'experience-*peira*' ought to be carefully noted. Anyone who reads the patristic texts sees the word *peira*, 'experience', over and over again. And in the *Hagioritic Tome* against Barlaam, the monks of the Holy Mountain invoke their own experience and say, 'As we know from our own slight experience'. In other words, they are humble, so they say that we know 'from our own slight experience'.
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> Palamas too condemns Barlaam and says, 'Who is this who does not accept Holy Scripture? Does he not even accept those who see? He is like a blind man, who does not accept what those who can see say.'
>
> Someone who can see says to the blind man that this and that exists. 'I do not believe you', replies the blind man, because he does not see anything himself and does not believe those who see. And he condemns Barlaam for this reason. It is clear from beginning to end that the patristic tradition is empirical. As it is empirical there is the question of terminology and there is the following paradox. From the First Ecumenical Council up to and including the Eighth Ecumenical Council an attempt was made to achieve uniformity in the wording of dogma. That happened at the Ecumenical Councils."

The Christian's whole spiritual life is connected with experience. It is neither speculative nor sentimental. In the beginning he accepts the experience of those who are experienced and later he can acquire his own spiritual experience under their guidance.

> "This raises the issue that someone may not personally have the same experiences as the Fathers of the Church, but because he knows about the experiences of the Fathers of the Church, he knows how these experiences relate to the theology of the Fathers, and he can analyse and evaluate things correctly".

Clearly the theology of the Church is inseparably linked with the acquisition of personal spiritual experience or, at the very least, with the acceptance of the experience of those who are experienced. No other theology is conceivable within the Church except this theology, which is the fruit of the experience of prayer and glorification. "According to the Fathers, the theologian ought to restrict himself to observations of the experience of the heart."

Someone who prays acquires experiences of God. Initially all thoughts (*logismoi*) depart from the heart, in which the grace of God begins to act. In this way spiritual changes take place within the heart.

> "After these experiences, when he reads about the experiences of the glorified saints, he understands their writings, and he himself can sometimes attain to glorification.
>
> Then the experience of dogma, which has already been ascertained through the experience of illumination, becomes his own. Because he knows that the Prophets and Apostles and saints who reached this state passed through the same stages as he is passing through."

When personal experience is mentioned this does not mean that someone is estranged from the life of the Church and lives an individualistic life. Experience is acquired in the Church, and the Sacraments are combined with asceticism. Most of the time man arrives at the experience of illumination and glorification through the Sacraments and asceticism, but sometimes the opposite happens.

> "The Apostle Paul underwent glorification first and was baptised afterwards. This is a strange phenomenon, because first he saw the

uncreated glory, on the road to Damascus, and went up as far as the third heaven, as he writes himself. And after the experience of glorification he was baptised. Something similar happened to Symeon the New Theologian. He had the experience of glorification first and afterwards was tonsured as a monk."

2. Experience as the Basis of Orthodox Theology

Theology does not belong among the theoretical branches of learning, such as philosophy and metaphysics, but among the practical and positive sciences. This is because in Orthodox theology, as in the positive sciences, there is observation and experiment. An event is observed, someone arrives at a theory, and subsequently he has the possibility of verifying this theory.

> "The scientist looks at what he knows and studies, and he gathers information about it from experience. Knowledge is purely empirical in all the positive sciences. According to the Fathers of the Church, the same happens in theology."

We realise from this that the holy Fathers were not philosophers or metaphysicians, but positivists and empiricists. They experienced illumination and glorification.

> "We agree absolutely that we are positivists. We accept only empirical phenomena and nothing else. We are absolutely in agreement on this. Because the Fathers only accepted empirical phenomena. Illumination is a purely empirical phenomenon, nothing else. Glorification too is an empirical condition. The entire theology of the Church originates from these empirical states."

The example of the astronomer and the microbiologist is typical. It shows that their science is empirical and not speculative. We can see Orthodox theology from this perspective.

> "Someone becomes an astronomer when he knows how to handle the telescope. He is an astronomer. He knows how to read the map of the stars and the heavenly bodies, how to locate them, how to see them with the telescope, how to study them, and so on. An astronomer is someone who observes, and knows the science of observing. A microbiologist knows how to detect microscopic

organisms with a microscope. A scientist is someone who observes and has experience.

Just as in the other sciences a scientist is someone with knowledge, experience and expertise in his science, so in theology too, the theologian is someone who has been illuminated and sees, whose eyes have been enlightened, who has the experience of illumination, noetic prayer, unceasing remembrance of God, and so on."

Orthodox theology is not something speculative but a positive science and it includes experimentation and observation (theoria).

"Theology is an extremely positive science, because the method of control is empirical. As there is experimentation in all the positive sciences, so there is experimentation in Orthodox theology. There is a laboratory for experiments, there are criteria, and there is very careful control, so that we know who has reached these states."

In sciences on the human level the purpose of describing observations is so that they can be repeated and verified by anyone wishing to acquire experience and knowledge.

"In every science experiments are described and scientific data is recorded in books. On the one hand, we have a record of observations and a description of observations and experiments. On the other, the aim of this description is that others may be guided to the same observation. So we have observation and description of the observation, in order that we may be led back to the same observation.

An astronomer describes some of the stars. I have the description. I have a map, perhaps a photograph as well. Using the telescope I repeat the experience that the one before me had. He had the experience and described it. The aim of his description is to convey to me what he saw, but also to make me capable of seeing it too, either in my imagination or on a photograph or with the telescope. So the purpose of the description is repetition. Observation, description, repetition of the observation.

The patristic tradition is exactly the same. The glorified are the observers. They have the vision of God, they describe it, and the aim of the description is the repetition of the observation, that is to

say, glorification, the expression of glorification, with the aim that the rest of us may also reach glorification. Exactly the same scientific method exists in all the positive sciences and in Orthodox theology. The difference is that, whereas in the positive sciences what is described is describable, in Orthodox theology what is described is indescribable. That is the problem, because God is not similar to anything created and there is no likeness between what is uncreated and what is created.

There is the experience of glorification, which is the vision of God, but what is observed is indescribable, so it is described in a way that makes it clear that it is indescribable. The Fathers continually emphasise that God is indescribable, indescribable, indescribable. But all the same they describe Him. They describe Him using symbolic concepts, which is why we have apophatic theology, because for every affirmation there is a negation. Not because God is affirmation and negation, but because God transcends both the affirmation and the negation..."

Those who have reached the stage of glorification have personal experience of God. They see the glory of God. There is, however, a difference between what is created and uncreated and God, even when He is revealed, remains a mystery and indescribable. Orthodox theology, therefore, is apophatic, though not agnostic. In this respect Orthodox theology differs from the sciences.

"In the other sciences, what is described is describable and something that someone can describe. There are colours, forms, mathematical symbols etc, and you can talk about it. You know that it is in motion and that it has mass, weight, velocity and so on. In theology, what someone sees in the state of glorification, apart from Christ's human nature, is indescribable. It bears no resemblance to anything created. There is no similarity that would enable you to describe it by comparing it with something else. It has no colour, form, size, height or weight; nothing. It has nothing in common with anything created, with anything that we know through our experience, through our faculties of touch, smell, sight, reasoning or hearing, with anything we have experienced physically or mentally. What is called God is completely different. There is no similarity.

The Fathers stress this again and again. How do they know that there is no similarity? From experience. The experience of glorification itself taught them that there is no similarity. He is neither darkness nor light. And we have all those beautiful expressions of apophatic theology. That is precisely where the difference from the positive sciences lies. The positive sciences are concerned with describable things and theology with something indescribable.

The criterion of Orthodox theology is not the beautiful language that we use when we speak about apophatic theology. There are some people who play with words, who use the fine language of apophatic theology. You know, this language is full of poetry, this way of thinking is amazing. But some people are astounded by the ideas of apophatic theology and do not know where the foundations of this theology lie. They teach apophatic theology, and it has ended up as a beautiful patchwork of fine thoughts and words. What I mean is that theology has become identified with fine words."

The foundation of Orthodox theology is the experience of revelation and not speculation. Affirmative and apophatic theology both originate from experience.

"The foundations of affirmative and apophatic theology have no connection at all with human speculation. They originate from the same experience of glorification. It is confirmed by that experience that there is no similarity at all between what is created and what is uncreated. This is the foundation of this theology, a foundation based on revelation. It is not based on human speculation.

On account of this experience of glorification, man, as an observer, having ascertained this from his experience, knows that there is no similarity between created and uncreated things, and that what is uncreated does not correspond to any concept that man can conceive in his brain. To be sure, when talking about God for purposes of spiritual guidance, he is obliged to use affirmative language. But to make sure that God is never identified with these things, as He is not the same as the concepts that a human being can comprehend, the affirmatives are also corrected with negations. We have affirmation and negation on every issue, so we say, for example, that God is seen invisibly and known without knowledge, and so on."

Because the saints reached glorification they have identical experiences and the same knowledge of God.

"Scientists, whether they are doctors, mathematicians, geologists, agriculturists or whatever, research a particular subject and they describe their findings in words and concepts. When they write, their descriptions correspond to the experiences that anybody who wishes to study that science can have.

Experiences are always the same. When a geologist or a mechanical engineer in Russia, say, writes something, once it is translated into other languages, a Frenchman, a German or an American can read it, and they understand one another.

This happens in all the positive sciences. There is a common language that reflects the experience of various sciences. When someone describes an experiment on the other side of the world, he describes his experiment and says, I did this and that. Then someone else, if he does not have confidence in what the first scientist writes, repeats the same experiment exactly as he describes it, and obtains the same result. And as long as they all have the same results, all agree that this is the correct analysis of this fact. Certain views prevail, which are completely independent of religious or political or sociological convictions, totally unconnected with them.

This whole approach to research is part of the positive sciences, because the positive sciences reflect knowledge that is checked by repeated actions, combinations of things that produce a specific result. This result proves that the method is correct."

In the sciences, the research scientists' experience is passed on to their students. Empirical knowledge forms a circle. The same process can be seen in Orthodox theology, the difference being that there are degrees of knowledge, and also that the vision of God is incomprehensible and indescribable.

"We have a circle as we have in astronomy. The first one looked through the telescope at Mount Wilson and saw two hundred galaxies for the first time, whereas previously they thought that there was only one. They put the telescope into action, they took photographs and they all on the first occasion saw two hundred galaxies. Now they have found something like one hundred thousand galaxies.

The astronomer Hubble, who was the first to use the telescope, had an experience with what he saw. This experience also becomes the experience of his successors.

We have the experience, we have the expression of that experience, we have the repetition of the experience, and afterwards, in astronomy and the positive sciences, we also have more profound experience. Why? Because the better the instrument we create, the better the experiences and the wider the scope of the experiences that we shall have in the positive sciences.

In theology, though, we do not have this kind of knowledge, because the subject is indescribable. It cannot be described. It is not created and we cannot know what is uncreated using created instruments. Man is, however, naturally endowed with the organ called the nous, with which he prepares himself to have this experience.

When he reaches the experience of glorification, however, as there is no similarity between what is uncreated and what is created, what is uncreated remains a mystery and indescribable. He becomes a beholder of the indescribable, which he is unable to describe even if he wished to. He cannot understand it even if he wanted to. It is incomprehensible. It is a mystery beyond words. One simply sees it. For that reason the repetitive part is always the repetition of the same reality, with the same limits...

The only difference is that some only get as far as illumination and do not reach glorification. Some have one illumination, or two or three illuminations. Others not only reach illumination but vision. Someone else may attain to continuous vision. Forty days and forty nights, continuously walking about and constantly beholding the glory of God...

The experience may vary in intensity, but the possibility of describing it does not vary. Everything that one can say in the state of illumination is the same as someone else says in the state of vision or continuous vision. Once again, God is indescribable and beyond compare. He is what He is. The experience is the same."

It is clear, therefore, that the knowledge possessed by the saints is based on their personal experience and not on reason and imagination. The same happens as in the case of scientific knowledge, where

experiment and observation come first and knowledge is derived from them. For that reason the saints recognise one another and understand one another.

> "There is a biologist in Russia who sees a microbe through his electronic microscope, something in the cell, how it is composed, etc. He describes it. Now, of course, they even take photographs with the electronic means that they have. There is no need to describe it any more; they take photographs with the electronic equipment. And someone else in America sees the same thing as the other one saw in Russia. Exactly the same thing. All those who have the equipment see the same things and do their analyses and reach the same conclusions, with the same description.
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> The same happens with patristic theology. In both traditions (East and West) they have the same experience of illumination and glorification, and when they meet they recognise one another. In the same way as one biologist recognises another biologist, and one mathematician recognises another. Why? Because they all have the same experience.
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> The Fathers say that, if they were to use reason as a basis, people would continuously quarrel among themselves, because everyone sees things differently using his own reason. Unless reason is corrected by trial, experience and observation, it is uncontrollable. Everyone imagines whatever he likes."

The results of the experience of glorification are divinely inspired and infallible, so those who have divine experience have divine inspiration.

> "The experience of the vision of God makes man divinely inspired, so he writes things that are divinely inspired. I ask myself: How is this different from an astronomer who is inspired by the stars, who looks at the stars, experiences the stars and describes the stars? He is inspired by the stars. Inspiration from the stars is not something mechanical. He sees with his senses, his reason observes and classifies his experience and he prepares the description. All scientists do this. In what way are they different from contemporary scientists in this field: biologists, chemists and so on, from the point of view of descriptive analysis?

The God-seer uses descriptive language and tells us that what he beholds without beholding - because he sees the energy and not the essence - is indescribable with this descriptive language, and he uses symbolic names for the purpose that we explained."

Orthodox theology, as expressed by the Fathers of the Church, is empirical. We also see this in the Apostles. The entire biblical and patristic tradition speaks about experience.

"Correct theology is an expression of the experience of glorification. The key to Orthodox theology is experience. Our own theologians stress that they base theology on experience. The Fathers have experience or theoria (vision) as the sole foundation of their theology."

The experience of theology is the observation of the energies of God, the vision of the glory of God. This, too, is a personal experience.

"In order to theologise, someone must have experience of theology, not just think about it. To be a theologian, someone cannot simply think theology and identify his thinking with theology: no! He will acquire experience, if he becomes a theologian. He will pass through purification, he will reach illumination, and then he will be a theologian, once he has illumination.

When he has the energy of God within him, he becomes an observer God's energies, and for that reason, as an observer, he undertakes a descriptive analysis. He knows himself how he reached this state and he is in a position to lead others to this state.

So he works scientifically. Scientifically, but in what way? In a way that resembles medicine more closely than the other sciences. There is a real similarity. He accepts a diagnosis from his spiritual father. This diagnosis concerns his connection with the Elder. This is the diagnosis. It says that God exists, the incarnate Word, Christ, exists; there is the veneration of the saints, and so on.

How do we know this? Do we know it from philosophy? Do we know it from the positive sciences? Where do get this knowledge? We know it from revelation. How do we know it from revelation? Because there are God-seers, people who have seen the glory of

God, who have reached glorification. They are the eye-witnesses concerning the uncreated glory of God, because between God and the world there is no similarity at all..."

Orthodox theology is an expression of the vision of God, but theology is not the same as the experience of glorification.

"Essentially a theologian is someone who is in the state of illumination: he is a theologian. When he attains to glorification, at that stage theology comes to an end, not in the sense that it becomes useless, but it comes to an end, in the sense that he has now risen above theology and understands that theology cannot be identified with the experience of glorification, even though one depends on the other, because theology results from the experience of glorification.

This is called divine inspiration. It results from the experience of glorification, but it is not identified with the experience of glorification. Theology – particularly in the form of prayer and spiritual vigilance – this kind of theology has a therapeutic purpose and no other aim."

When the saints theologise they do not draw on human knowledge and their personal studies, but on their personal experience. They know the uncreated energy of the Triune God from personal experience.

"St Antony the Great, who was not educated in a worldly sense, knew that Arius was a heretic from his own experience. When he had a vision of God he did not see a created Word (Logos). He saw that He was uncreated."

Thus there is the God of the experience of the saints and the God of the philosophers and speculative thinkers, and there is a difference between the two. The experience of the saints is not the same as the speculation of the philosophers.

"The God Who exists is the God Who is known in the experience of glorification. When the Prophet, Apostle or saint reaches glorification and tastes God in his experience, this God of experience exists. The empirical God exists. The other gods of other people are not gods. Those gods do not exist. This God exists."

Orthodox theology is not metaphysical. Some people make the

serious mistake of identifying it with metaphysics. Whatever we know about God comes from the experience of the saints who beheld God and from our own experience, if we have any.

"From Orthodox experience we do not know of any God of metaphysics. In fact, we would have to describe as superstition the idea that a god existed who could be identified with metaphysics. For us God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is the God of the experience of glorification. I know no other God.

This is of very great importance. Orthodox epistemology is clear, because it originates from purification, illumination and glorification. That is, the precise knowledge of God that we have as Orthodox Christians comes from the experience of purification, illumination and glorification of the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers of the Church, and we have no other source.

In an attempt by modern Greek theologians - Do you know who the modern Greek theologians were? Those who occupied the posts of the University of Athens in the first few years after it was founded - these theologians, in accordance with modern Greek patriotism, attempted to remove the Prophets and replace them with the classical Greek philosophers. So, instead of the Old Testament, classical Greek philosophy became the preparation for the New Testament. Every patriot was supposed to accept this. That was one reason why the monks became the enemies of modern Greek nationalism, according to the modern Greeks."

The Fathers base themselves on experience, not on philosophy or simply on imagination. Even experience is not linked with the simple study of Holy Scripture.

"This whole structure is based on empirical knowledge. It is not the theory of some philosopher or of someone who sits with the Bible in his hand and imagines what Holy Scripture says, or takes the Fathers of the Church to help him read Holy Scripture, and imagines what the Fathers say and what Holy Scripture says. Everyone proceeds according to his imagination."

"To reach the point of being in communion with God, we must first of all understand the diagnosis of faith, of the state of man, and then the treatment. So we have diagnosis and cure."

Orthodox theology is taught by those who have personal experience of glorification.

> "Now we come to the issue of experience. Before someone has experience, when he has no experience, he is taught by those who have. Is that not so?
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> We go to school and the teacher tells us about the stars. We have a primary school book in which we see various photographs of stars and learn certain things: the major stars and planets, which are very familiar from the book. Afterwards, in the evening, if we live in a village where there is not much lighting, we can sit and gaze at the sight. We could spend our whole life in Athens without ever seeing the stars.
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> If someone wants to become an astronomer, he will go and find astronomers and a university where there is a Chair of Astronomy, a telescope and so on, and become an astronomer."

Someone can learn about God intellectually, but when he reaches the experience of glorification this intellectual experience ceases.

> "The purpose of theology is for theology to be abolished. Theology is abolished in the experience of glorification."

From all this we perceive that Western theology, which depends on speculation, philosophy and reason, ought to change and follow the empirical methodology of the Fathers. This is also determined by contemporary science.

> "Last summer I presented a paper in which I mentioned that Western theologians would either follow the empirical methodology of the Fathers of the Church in theological issues, or pack up and leave the arena, because they are no longer believable with their outdated anthropology, epistemology and so on. I also mentioned that the final blow against metaphysics was the appearance of quantum mechanics.
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> Quantum mechanics finally destroyed the meaning of pure mathematics and it is obvious that no trace remains of the existence of anything immutable in the world. Everything is in continuous motion and no one can trace out beforehand exactly how an electron inside an atom will function. The electron is no longer predestined

by the theory of Max Planck. This has been proved now by experiments."

Consequently the true theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church is empirical and revelational. It is an experience of revelation and not philosophical and speculative.

3. Revelation and Experience

When we speak about spiritual experience we mean God's revelation to man. God reveals Himself and the glorified human being acquires knowledge of God and becomes a teacher in the Church.

> "The experience of glorification means a revelation of the Holy Trinity."

During the revelation man sees the glory of God and knows, as we mentioned earlier, that there is no similarity at all between what is created and what is uncreated.

> "The experience of glorification is revelation. Someone who reaches glorification sees the glory of God and experiences the glory of God. For that reason he knows from experience that no similarity exists between uncreated and created things.
>
> How does he know this? By philosophising? No, he does not know this from philosophy. He knows it from his experience, which is called *theosis* or glorification. He knows that what he saw, he did not see it by himself, but he sees it through God."

The experience of glorification is an experience of the uncreated glory of God.

> "In the early Church the Fathers did not use the term 'essence'. They avoided it. In the experience of glorification they did not see any essence. They saw the glory, which is the energy of God. They were also aware of the three hypostases."

In spite of the revelation of God, God remains a mystery, because He transcends all created things.

> "God goes beyond all man's capabilities. For that reason, in the revelation itself God remains a mystery."
>
> "Man also participates in the uncreated Light and has an experience that now transcends words and concepts. Because this

experience goes beyond words and concepts, Christ says, *'You cannot bear...'* (John 16:12)."

Although in Holy Scripture the highest degree of the experience of revelation given to man is called perfection, sanctification or glorification, in patristic teaching it is described as *theosis*. Knowing something about God is not the same as knowing God Himself. The experience of God is given at Pentecost. The experience of Pentecost is referred to as the experience of glorification, and the saint who has lived through this experience is described as glorified. The saints have identical experiences and, as a consequence, they have the same knowledge. They are the authority in the Church.

"God is revealed to man through this experience of revelation, which we call glorification in the Orthodox tradition."

"What is called revelation is the experience of glorification. Man cannot know God beyond the experience of glorification. He can know something about God, but he cannot know God Himself.

So here we have a fundamental distinction in patristic epistemology. Knowing something about God is different from knowing God Himself. They are not the same thing. Somebody can know about God from his imagination. He can imagine things about God, hear things about God, read the Holy Scripture, and say anything at all about God. What I hear and believe about God may be accurate, but it may not be."

When someone reaches the experience of revelation, he reaches glorification. Then the natural functions of the body are overcome, without being abolished.

"The Fathers stress that in the experience of revelation, when God is revealed to man, this experience transcends man's senses, his reason and his nous. All the natural workings of the human being are surpassed, although these natural functions are also included in the experience. That is to say, they participate in the experience, but the experience itself goes beyond these natural human functions. The experience of glorification transcends concepts, even though the experience illuminates man to have correct concepts about God Who transcends concepts."

The glorified are the bridge between God and man. They are able to reach this point because of the existence of the God-man Christ, in Whom the divine and human nature were hypostatically united (in His Person) without change, separation, division or alteration. The glorified, who have experienced the revelation in the Person of Christ, are the authority in the Church. We acquire knowledge of God through the experiences of the glorified or through our own glorification if, by the grace of God, we experience it.

> "For the Orthodox Church there is one epistemological bridge, which is those who have been glorified. There is no other bridge. What is called revelation or the experience of glorification comes from the glorified. Beyond the experience of glorification man cannot know God. He can know about God, but he cannot know God Himself."

The experience of the revelation offers man theological knowledge about God, which is different from human knowledge. This knowledge is the foundation of Orthodox theology.

> "This knowledge that the saints have of God includes man's faculty of reason, because man's reason and his body remain observers of this experience. He does not lose his senses; they participate in the experience of divine vision. On the other hand, the experience of divine vision itself surpasses the senses and the power of reason, so the knowledge of God is beyond reason.
>
> The Fathers describe this knowledge as 'unknowing', not because it is bereft of knowledge, but because it surpasses knowledge. It is not a kind of knowledge. In comparison with man's natural knowledge, which he acquires through reason, it is unknowing. It is not, however, ignorance, because it is the vision of God. Man really participates in the uncreated, which has no similarity with created things. This is the experience of the Prophets, Apostles and saints of the Church and is the foundation of theology. It is the only real and secure bridge between God and man."

Someone who is glorified acquires knowledge of God. Then his speech is inspired by God.

> "This experience creates a divinely inspired state within man,

as he has reached divine vision. The concepts that he has as a result of this experience, these concepts are inspired by God, even though the experience goes beyond any concept. There is a connection between revelation and divine inspiration, in which the whole meaning of the divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments is summed up for us."

If someone does not have his own experience of revelation, he accepts the experience of the glorified, the friends of God.

"So, if you have experience, that is fine. If not, you should at least have a friend who has experienced the uncreated Light. This friend of yours should confirm to you that he has seen it, and then you should accept it."

The Fathers did not speak about God in a speculative way but, having had the experience, they cured their spiritual children.

"When the early Fathers used to speak about God, they did not do so in order to understand about God, to put God into words. They spoke in a different way, not as speculative theologians but as spiritual Fathers. This means that the change of terminology in the patristic context is not very significant. It is sufficient for us to know what they are saying and for the experience of glorification to be correct and the same. That is important.

If the Church is left to itself, it does its work. And what is its work? To cure people; to lead people from the state they are in through purification to illumination. This is the work of the Church: to illuminate the world."

Whatever is founded on revelational experience is divinely inspired and true, whereas whatever is speculative and not based on experience is false. This is the dividing line between heresy and truth. Heresy is whatever is far removed from the experience of glorification.

"From the point of view of the patristic tradition, the formulation of dogma in opposition to heresy was an expression of the mystical experience of the Church. Because heresy was opposed to the life of the Church and contrary to the experience of the Church. What is this experience? It is purification, illumination and glorification. Orthodoxy is anything that accords with this experience."

Heresy is lack of experience, because it is impossible to distinguish those who have personal experience from the life and experience of the Church.

> "If the experience of glorification exists in heresy, then it is not heresy. If illumination exists in heresy, then it cannot be heresy. If illumination and glorification do not exist, it is heresy."

It is clear that someone who is glorified and participates in the mystery of Pentecost is transformed and undergoes change. Thus we say that theology becomes experience. It is not a matter of feigned outward ethics, but a transformation of the whole of man's being. Someone who is glorified has gone beyond what we call ethics.

> "Someone who reaches glorification is not simply a moral human being, but has surpassed ethics and has attained to love which does not seek its own. He has experiences and visions of God that someone who is simply moral does not have."

The experience of glorification is formulated in a dogmatic statement in order to safeguard revelational truth and to prevent it being altered by heresy.

4. Experience and Kinds of Experience

The Fathers of the Church know from experience that man's relationship with God is empirical. It is not the outcome of reason and speculation. They teach that everyone will see the glory of God, either as delightful light or as consuming fire.

> "On different levels, now, at these two stages (light or fire) the opinion of the Church is purely empirical. It is empirical, not metaphysical."

There may be speculation about the experience, but when someone gets as far as the experience of the glorified, speculation comes to an end and he knows exactly what he knows and what he does not know.

> "There is no speculation in experience. There may be speculation about the experience, because everyone who does not have the experience can speculate. However, when someone has the experience, he no longer speculates about the experience, because from then on he knows exactly what the experience is and what it is not. By knowing what it is and what it is not, he knows very clearly what he knows and what he does not know.
>
> For this reason theology is not only a matter of someone knowing what he knows, but also of knowing what he does not know. That is to say, to know equally well what he does not know and what he does know."

If Christianity is the outcome of speculation, it cannot help us to reach glorification.

> "If there is no experience of something, forget it. It is speculation. If it is speculation, we cannot follow the speculations of this one or the other. So, suppose the professor who teaches theology speculates. Am I obliged to sit examinations on the teacher's

speculation and to take it as dogma? Why? It is nonsense. Is that not so?

As in the positive sciences. Imagine now if we had science professors who speculated, and if the students were obliged to accept the professor's speculation as facts. Would such a thing be possible? Definitely not. That would be impossible in any science. For the professor to say fine words, to spend his time on fine thoughts. Will someone become a Christian on account of fine thoughts? Well, some people do. Fine thoughts, so to speak. But is this Christianity?

Experience is the beginning and end of the matter. Christ teaches about love which *'does not seek its own'*, but is there no way of acquiring this love? In that case the first speculative thinker would be Christ, Who was reflecting on fine ideas about love. Fine indeed, but if they are unrealisable, then He was no more than a dreamer. And if Christ was a dreamer, He was not the God-man of the Ecumenical Councils."

But this is not the case. Orthodox theology is not philosophy but "an empirical reality that does not originate from any sort of philosophy."

This is why our Fathers rejected philosophy as a method of knowing God.

"I think it is time for Orthodox theologians to understand that we can never make an alliance with philosophy. That is why our forebears always rejected the philosophical method. They never accepted the philosophical approach, speculative thinking and so one. They refused all such things. They were in favour of empirical knowledge.

Anyone who makes a thorough investigation of patristic epistemology will see that it is empirical from beginning to end. The Fathers do not accept anything that is not empirical. The whole of theology springs from experience, not from speculation."

"Since those who believe have reached this state, they have this experience within them. So, provided that this experience exists, what need is there of metaphysics? What need is there of philosophy? How does philosophy help? Did any sort of philosophy ever help anyone to reach the state of being a temple of the Holy Spirit?"

Whereas Orthodox theology is empirical, contemporary theology, unfortunately, has become speculative and depends more on rationalism.

> "It was Korais who laid the foundations for the ruin of empirical theology, and the replacement of empirical theology by ancient Greek philosophy, which is metaphysical."

Modern Greek theology rests upon speculation and philosophical analysis of terms, thoughts and concepts.

> "Orthodox theology has a very profound link with anthropology and with the empirical perception of theology, but not with the conjectural perception of theology, which is the approach of modern Greek theology.
>
> Modern Greek theology is based on philosophical speculation and the philosophical analysis of terms, thoughts and concepts. Modern Greek theologians attempt to work on theology by means of thinking or systems of thought. The Fathers, however, forbid such speculation. Speculative thinking is not allowed for theologians. It is only through the experience of illumination that one can reach the point of theologising, teaching others, hearing confessions and so on."

Someone who is inspired by the Holy Spirit has many authentic experiences. The whole Christian life within the Church, with the Sacraments and asceticism, is empirical. We shall identify certain kinds of experience.

A distinction is generally made in the experience of the Fathers between the experience of illumination and the experience of glorification.

> "When we say 'divinely inspired' in the patristic sense, we mean that someone is directed by his experience. He has a specific experience and is guided by that experience. Experience concerning God has two forms or categories with diverse variations. There are also variations within each category. These experiences concerning God are generally divided into the stage of illumination and the stage of glorification. The stage of glorification is not a permanent state in this life. It lasts as long as someone attains to glorification and stays in that state, and afterwards he returns to illumination.

The stable spiritual state is the state of illumination, because someone who goes on to glorification, goes – someone goes for five minutes, another for ten minutes, someone else for a day, forty days, perhaps even a year, perhaps a few years, but he always returns to the state of illumination. So the main state of Orthodox mutual understanding between the Orthodox is the state of illumination."

The experience of glorification has various degrees.

"The Fathers of the Church divide the experience of glorification into three categories. These are enlightenment, vision and continuous vision, and illumination. It is also described as theoria, and this theoria is both illumination and glorification."

Ecstasy is one kind of experience.

"Ecstasy according to St Symeon the New Theologian is a lesser experience than rapture. When someone loses his bearings, that is ecstasy. Ecstasy, however, is a temporary state and afterwards, when rapture continues, ecstasy ceases and the whole man participates."

During the course of noetic prayer, the proof that someone is in the state of illumination of the nous is that the Holy Spirit Himself prays within him, as we read in many passages of the Epistles of the Apostle Paul. When the one praying is granted the vision of the uncreated Light, he experiences glorification. The experience of *theosis* is called glorification, because the man (soul and body) is glorified, that is to say, he participates in the glory-Light of God. The glory of God is the uncreated energy of the Divinity, which is seen as Light.

The experience of *theosis*-glorification is also called the experience of Pentecost, in which the holy Apostles shared. This is the highest degree of revelation.

The saints of the Church, who participate in the uncreated glorifying energy of God, know from their own experience whether an experience is true or false. In patristic language this is called discernment. There is a difference between hearing the word of God from the saints and personal experience of the vision of God, just as there is a distinction between purification, illumination and glorification.

"Discernment is learnt by experience. For someone to hear by means of words, in the way that we hear these words from the

Prophets, the Apostles and the saints of the Church, who teach us with words that convey concepts, is something completely different from having the experience.

When someone has experience, he is not taught by these words. He was taught by these words at the stages of purification and of illumination. But when he reaches glorification, he is no longer taught by words, but has experience. He knows from his experience that he does not participate in the essence of God, but participates in His energies."

The saints discern experience of the Holy Spirit from other, anthropocentric experiences.

"(In the course of the Orthodox experience) the nous does not undergo a departure from the world, the realm of dimensions, colours and so on. This is an important point and calls for careful attention, in order to ensure that the Orthodox experience of glorification is never identified with the mysticism of Buddhists, Africans and various idolatrous religions and philosophies.

It is something completely different. It is the only tradition which has sacred relics as the result of the experience. Sacred relics with the distinctive features and characteristics of the relics that exist in Orthodox theology do not exist in any other tradition."

The saints also differentiate spiritual experience from illusion and hypnotism.

"Is hypnotism an experience or not? Why might it not be an experience? It could be a delusion. Hypnotism can lead to delusion, which means non-compliance with the correct composition of empirical impressions and so on.

All the elements that make up a delusion are from the senses. They are not from elsewhere, because the one who has the delusion does not do so because he has lost contact with perceptible things, but because his memory has become disorganised and the connection that takes place in his brain is faulty. Sensory experiences exist; it may be something that he sees at this moment, but these things exist.

As for noetic prayer, it is not something that existed in the

past, something that someone dreams about, as in a delusion, when someone sees something that in reality he does not see. In the case of noetic prayer, it is something that happens at that moment, now, this very moment and every moment. Do you follow me? It is not a reminder of the past."

Furthermore, the Fathers discern between experiences of the Holy Spirit and demonic experiences, because there is Orthodox theology and demonic theology.

"There is no way in which theology descended from heaven. That is to say, both the names and concepts that make up theology are from the environment. This means that, whether we like it or not, our theology has a direct relationship with the environment.

We do not have a theology that came down from heaven. Theology is the human reaction to specific experiences. If someone has demonic experiences, he will have a corresponding 'theology'. If he is inspired by God and has correct experiences, he will also have a correct theology."

5. Genuine Experience

Within the Church there is a rich abundance of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which illumines and sanctifies anyone who freely offers himself for sanctification. In order for someone to acquire the experience of illumination and glorification, his nous, with the help of his spiritual father, must be purified of thoughts (*logismoi*), images and fantasies, and noetic prayer must develop, which is also called 'single-thought' prayer, because there should be only one word in the heart: prayer with the name of Christ.

> "This is the prayer of the Holy Spirit within the heart. This experience cannot come to someone unless the nous is cleared. The nous must be completely emptied of all thoughts."

Spiritual fathers who are experienced in the spiritual life help their spiritual children to acquire their own spiritual experience.

> "As regards acquiring this experience, that is a matter for each one and his spiritual father. In the role of professor you can go up to a certain point. You can indicate the method of learning Orthodox theology from a spiritual point of view and then you send him to a spiritual father who will get involved.
>
> This cannot be an issue for the professor; it is an issue for the spiritual father and his spiritual child, and on their own. Each one's state is different from everyone else's. The spiritual father knows the state of each one, and which spiritual solution is required.
>
> In the ascetic teaching of Orthodox theology we have this problem, that someone must reject from his nous all thoughts except one. It is not only bad thoughts that he has to throw out of his nous. He has to discard good thoughts as well. Any kind of thoughts must go."

In order for someone to reach divine vision his nous must be completely purified. That is why purification comes first and illumination and glorification follow.

Basically, the noetic faculty (energy) must be separated from the rational faculty (energy). The holy Fathers initially deactivated the rational faculty through obedience to God's commandment and to their spiritual father, or at least, they stopped cultivating it excessively. At the same time, they developed the noetic faculty through prayer and asceticism, so the noetic faculty acquired experience of God. Subsequently, in the struggle against heretics, they also used reason, which was under the direction of the illuminated nous.

"What I should like to stress is that in the patristic texts there is an amazing principle. The ascetic Fathers emphasise that being educated does not help someone to obtain purification of the nous, noetic prayer. Do you understand? That is one point. Secondly, they emphasise that it is necessary for man's nous to become formless and imageless, to discard everything, and for the nous to be empty, with nothing in it.

Some of those among us, who think that 'nous' means 'reason' in the writings of the Fathers, believe that these Fathers are teaching that, in order for someone to become pious, he ought to become illiterate, that is, to empty his nous of all concepts. That to attain to noetic prayer the rational faculty must be a clean slate.

St Gregory Palamas clearly speaks about the fact that learning is extremely good for exercising the reason. With regard to the nous, however, anyone who wants to acquire noetic prayer cannot continue to occupy his reason with studies, but should stop, if he has not already completed his education. Learning does not help in the acquisition of prayer. The problem is that the energy of the nous has become confused with the energy of reason and the energies need to be separated.

In the struggle to separate these energies, the nous should cease to concern itself with the concepts of the reason. However, in order for this to come about, in the first stages of asceticism the reason itself must cease to concern itself with them. When, however, the nous acquires noetic prayer, the reason is set free once more and occupies itself with ordinary matters.

For this reason, when the great Fathers of the Church, who had noetic prayer, went out of the monastery on becoming bishops, they

did not cease to be monks because they had noetic prayer with them – even as patriarchs or bishops – they had it within them. When they fought the heretics, however, they exercised their reason. Their illuminated nous enlightened them to interpret Holy Scripture correctly and to struggle against the heretics. However, although the battle against the heretics was directed by the illuminated nous, it was fought by means of reason.

That is why St Antony himself, for instance, who was illiterate, met the Greek philosophers and defeated them. Why? Because his experience provided him with the arguments and he knew them well. What about the archetypes of Plato and so on? When someone has a vision of God he does not see any form. The vision is formless. So Plato is immediately dismissed, and Plotinus and the rest are sent on their way by illiterate monks. But how? By the experience of glorification. They knew precisely how to separate rational knowledge from theological knowledge, because they knew their own subjects well."

Genuine experience of God has sound results and consequences. Since the experience is psychosomatic, it changes and transfigures the whole human being, who is made up of soul and body. These are the 'empirical attractions' that draw non-Orthodox to the Orthodox Church.

"The success of Orthodoxy abroad is mainly due to the tradition of noetic prayer. There are thousands of non-Orthodox who become Orthodox. They become Orthodox through patristic theology, ascetic teaching, monasticism, iconography, music and so on. All these are empirical attractions that draw them to Orthodoxy.

There is no organised Orthodox mission to them. They are researchers who sit on their own and study. They become Orthodox on their own. A strange phenomenon. Not only Western Christians become Orthodox, but even atheists and Jews. You now see Protestants who have, for example, great reverence for St Gregory Palamas."

A significant consequence of experience is that in this case man's faith becomes inward and grows in strength. It is not an intellectual faith, but spiritual and in the heart. It is an inner power, an empirical testimony, "which makes a man believe".

Someone who is glorified can interpret Holy Scripture in a divinely inspired way, because he has within him the Holy Spirit Himself, Who illumined the writers of Holy Scripture. He perceives, however, that these words are not absolutely identical with the reality of the divine vision.

Then he distinguishes between uncreated and created energies, particularly energies originating from the devil. This takes place, of course, under the guidance of the spiritual father.

He is not even afraid of death, but overcomes it.

> "Someone who now, in this life, reaches glorification, is no longer ruled by death and the experience of glorification continues even after death."

What is more, as long as the one who is glorified lives in this world he exudes fragrance and does miracles, and after his death he becomes a holy relic.

> "From the patristic viewpoint, the holy relic is the result of the experience that someone has in his life, if he reaches illumination and noetic prayer. If you arrive at this state and remain faithful to the end of your life, you leave holy relics."

As a good scientist can verify the positive achievements of other scientists, the same applies in Orthodox theology. Anyone who participates in the experience of illumination and glorification perceives the spiritual state someone else is in. Usually this verification is undertaken by spiritual fathers, who have empirical knowledge of God.

> "In patristic theology there is empirical verification as to who is a temple (of the Holy Spirit) and who is not. Every spiritual father who knows about these matters can do this."

All those who are at a certain level of the spiritual life recognise those who are at the same level.

> "All the others who are in the state of illumination discern the other one's state of glorification. Those who are in the state of illumination know when someone reaches glorification, because they too have a reflection of this experience."

This also happens when they read the writings of illuminated and

glorified writers. Those who are in a spiritual state of grace perceive the state the Fathers were in when they wrote their various texts. If someone who is glorified reads the writings of St Symeon the New Theologian and Nikitas Stithatos, he perceives the spiritual experience that they had.

> "It is so obvious from the life of Symeon the New Theologian by Nikitas Stithatos, from his poems and writings, that he speaks from the perspective of the experience of glorification. Anyone who knows certain things about glorification and reads Symeon the New Theologian will understand that he has the same experiences all the others had."

Unfortunately contemporary bishops and university professors are unable to evaluate the spiritual experiences of monks.

> "Something that exists is not comprehensible to everyone. For example, here and now there are spiritual experiences among monks that a bishop today does not understand. Is this not the case? The Orthodox bishop today does not understand. Nor does the university professor understand. Usually the professor is even worse. These experiences exist, but they are not correctly evaluated from the point of view of university learning."

6. Conveying Experience

God reveals Himself to the glorified and the glorified use their reason to translate the revelation into their language.

> "If God spoke with human language, then on the day of Pentecost each one would not have heard in his own dialect. These are the mysteries of God at Pentecost, this is the experience of glorification. In the experience of glorification, the manifestation of God, man's reason is inspired and translates the experience into his language. This divine inspiration inspires each one with his own concepts."

The experience of illumination and glorification is passed on in writing and verbally, as far as it can be expressed.

> "Every time that Pentecost is repeated, we have the highest form of divine inspiration, whether it is written down or not. Divine inspiration may not be recorded in writing. Someone may have this experience and not write anything. Someone else has the experience and writes about it. Yet another, who only has the experience of illumination and not of glorification, may also write, and what he writes is illuminated."

Those who are glorified are called Prophets in both the Old and New Testaments. This experience of the vision of God is conveyed by using language.

> "When the Fathers speak about the Prophets' experience of glorification, they are obliged to use a particular language to convey the message of glorification and illumination from those who have this experience to those who do not have it."

On account of the needs of every age, and especially because heretics alter Orthodox theology, the glorified 'translate' the experience that they have acquired by the grace of the Holy Spirit into terms, im-

ages and names that they take from creation. Even when the experience is recorded, there is no substitute for revelation and the experience of glorification.

> "The concepts in the Old and New Testament can never replace either the revelation or the experience of glorification. They do, however, point out the path that someone should follow in order to progress from purification to illumination and glorification. This is the aim of the concepts in the Old and New Testaments. They have no other purpose."

Those who have reached glorification convey their experience verbally or in writing to their spiritual children to guide them to live through the same experience. This is the core of the Orthodox tradition.

> "The essence of the tradition is passing on this experience."

Part 3

The Bearers of Revelation

The Bearers of Revelation

The revelation of God is given to specific people who have reached a certain stage of the spiritual life, have beheld God and thus known the revelation. These people are called bearers of the divine revelation. God does not simply reveal Himself in history, but to the saints who live in history. In the familiar Beatitude Christ teaches: *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"* (Matt. 5:8).

The Apostle Paul says in the Epistle to the Hebrews: *"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son"* (Heb. 1:1).

Part 3 will draw attention to various aspects of the fact that the saints down through the ages are the recipients, heirs and bearers of divine revelation.

1. The Glorified

In patristic terminology the saints who participate in the glory of God are referred to as '*theoumenoi*'. The corresponding terminology in Holy Scripture is 'holy', 'perfect', 'glorified', and so on. We shall draw attention to certain aspects of the life of the glorified.

a) Terminology

The Greek word *theosis*, 'glorification', comes from the word *Theos*, 'God'. He who to various degrees participates in the grace of God is referred to as *theoumenos*-'glorified'. This is a gift from God to man, who thus acquires participation in God.

> "God Himself makes man god by grace, so that man undergoes glorification, becomes glorified. Through glorification he sees God and by means of the glory of God, which is grace, he sees the glory of God. In other words, *"In Your light we shall see light."*

The grace of God is called 'glory' because in the state of theoria it is seen as light-glory. Anyone who is in the appropriate spiritual state sees the glory-light of God, but someone who is not in a good state shares in the fire. This is said from the point of view that created light has two properties: it illuminates and it burns. Some it illuminates and others it burns. The same is true of the uncreated Light.

> "Whereas those who are glorified see glory as glory, the damned see the same glory as eternal fire and outer darkness."

> "The glory of God is light, glory and the source of perfection for the illuminated and glorified, but God Himself is 'eternal fire' and 'outer darkness' for the damned."

The glorified observe the glory of God and describe it, so that those who hear can repeat the method used by the glorified and themselves

attain to the vision of God. All the same, God does not resemble anything created, so in reality He cannot be described.

> "There is the experience of glorification and what someone sees is indescribable, so it is described in a way that makes it clear that it is indescribable. The Fathers continually stress that God is indescribable, yet they describe Him. But they describe Him using symbolic concepts. That is why we have apophatic theology."
>
> "When he reads about the experiences of the glorified, [the illuminated Christian] understands their writings and he himself can sometimes attain to glorification. Then he acquires experience of dogma that has already been verified by the experience of illumination."

The glorified who see God are inspired by God. They have real knowledge of God that does not come from books but from the experience of divine vision. The same thing can be seen in all the sciences where there is observation and experiment.

> "The biologist is inspired by cells, when he sees viruses they inspire him, when he sees microscopic organisms he is inspired by them, and so on, because he sees them. Is someone who is divinely inspired not rather like that? Those who see God are inspired by God. Who else can be divinely inspired? So people are divinely inspired either because they have attained to the vision of God, as have all the glorified, because this is the meaning of 'glorified', that they have reached the point of beholding God, or they are divinely inspired because they are in the state of illumination."

Because they are divinely inspired, they are unerring theologians in the Church. It is only these empirical theologians that we accept as criteria of the truth.

When those who are glorified convey the experience, they use the forms and words of human wisdom. The glorified possess uncreated truth, the knowledge of the uncreated God, and created truth, as they know created things. They make a clear distinction between uncreated and created truth.

> "Created truths are different from uncreated truths. There is no similarity at all between them. Created truth cannot be the means by

which we know uncreated truth. The only 'reconciliation' between the two truths is the one who is glorified, who has theoria (vision) and through glorification knows uncreated truth.

This is our bridge to this truth, not the philosopher or the scientific researcher. Someone who studies the natural world knows nature, but through nature he can only know about the existence of God; he cannot know God. Knowing about God is not the same as knowing God."

The glorified are united with Christ, Who unites what is created and uncreated in His hypostasis. Through Christ the glorified too acquire experience of what is uncreated. No one can acquire knowledge of God through philosophy. This comes about through the glorified, who have experience of God.

"There is no created bridge between God and man. The only bridge that exists is the experience of glorification granted to the glorified. Glorification is the vision of God, and man only knows that God exists and of God's messages to man through this experience, not through philosophy. Philosophy does not provide man with exact knowledge about God. It gives certain symbolic images, slight hints about God.

The only way that someone can obtain exact knowledge about God is through the experience of glorification, which only the glorified have for sure, those who are called Prophets, Apostles and saints of the Church, who have direct experience of God."

For that reason someone who is glorified is the most natural human being, because his nous functions naturally. He reaches glorification and fulfils the original purpose of man's creation, which is communion with God.

"For us Christians the normal human being, indeed the exemplary human being, is Christ. But Christ is God. So everyone who is glorified is a normal human being for us. His nous functions, prays and so on, because it is illumined. That is why he is normal, because he is illumined. The most normal of all is someone who has reached glorification and is included among the glorified."

On the other hand, all those who are not glorified and do not know

what glorification is, but assert that they are glorified, are deluded and lead others astray.

> "Even worse are those who, without being in the state of glorification, say that they are glorified. This is very strange! They are either deceivers or they do not know what glorification is."

Someone who is glorified "shares in the glory of God" and has attained to glorification. Those who are illuminated are also described as glorified, because they are being led towards glorification.

b) Divine Vision - Theology of the Glorified

The glorified, as those who behold God, know God and are subsequently shown to be true theologians within the Church. Knowledge of God is real, because it is participation in the energies of God and in every experience the whole of God is communicated. God "is inseparably separated into separate parts", "and is multiplied without becoming many". In other words, everyone who is glorified participates in the energies of God without God being fragmented. He is "whole and the same everywhere" and "He is divisible and indivisible". This is "the mystery of the presence of God in the world".

When someone who is glorified "sees the Holy Trinity, he knows that the glory too is uncreated." He makes a distinction between the uncreated energies of God and the created energies of creation. He is like the astronomers who observe the stars, but he also differs from the astronomers.

> "The glorified, who have divine inspiration, use images from every day human experience to enable them to guide people to God. The difference is as follows. When the astronomer looks through the telescope and describes what he sees in his scientific articles, he describes things that are describable. The things that the astronomer sees have size, they have chemical composition, they may have some kind of biological composition, they have light, and so on. So they describe to us, for example, that the light is orange. We did not see it through the telescope, but we know what colour orange is.
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> Because the things the astronomer sees are describable, when he describes them we form an image in our brain of what this object

is. When, however, the one who is glorified sees God, he sees something which has no similarity at all with created things. Consequently, whatever language he may use, God remains indescribable. He is not like a star seen by an astronomer."

"In the experience of glorification the glorified experience an uncreated God Who bears no resemblance to created things. This means that man's abstract ideas derived from created things cannot be ascribed or applied to God. The old naïve conviction that there are universals, archetypes of created things, has gone for good."

Someone who is glorified is very clearly differentiated from the speculative philosopher who uses nothing except his imagination and reason in order to speak about God. During the vision of God, the glorified human being participates in God Who is uncreated. He does not imagine the so-called archetypes of beings, as the philosophers do.

God is beyond every human concept. Through glorification, the one who is glorified shares in the uncreated God, sees the glory of God and then, in order to convey this experience as far as it is possible to do so, he uses human concepts, which are not lost during the experience.

"God does not reveal words. The words belong to the one who is glorified and are in his own language. The revelation belongs to the uncreated. That is why, on the day of Pentecost, everyone heard in his own language and understood in his own thoughts, from a rational point of view, something that surpasses reason."

During the vision of God, glorified man retains all the powers of his soul. He does not fall into a Platonic ecstasy. He has conceptual images, but the experience goes beyond understanding.

"Since God surpasses understanding glorified man has a concept that surpasses concepts. He is not speechless or in a Platonic ecstasy when he is in the state of glorification. When he is participating in the experience of glorification he himself understands that God is beyond understanding."

"There is no human concept that corresponds to the reality that is called God, because man cannot conceive God. This applies not only to those who have not reached glorification but also to the glorified.

When someone reaches the vision of God, glorification, he is, of course, accompanied in the experience by his concepts, but they do not correspond to God Himself."

In this way someone who is glorified becomes a theologian within the Church.

"When St Gregory the Theologian says, 'Theologians are those who are advanced in theoria', he means that the theologian is someone who is illuminated or glorified. That is the end of the matter."

"The fallen human being is someone whose nous is darkened. That is that. Now we have human beings in this state. And now we have those who are illuminated and glorified. This is the subject-matter of theology."

It follows that the glorified recognise each other, because they participate in the same experience, and have experience and knowledge in common.

"Anyone who knows certain things about glorification and reads Symeon the New Theologian will understand that he has the same experiences that all the others had. When we speak about rapture – and Nikitas Stithatos has so thoroughly organised the subject of rapture – when we speak about rapture, it is the same as the rapture of St Paul or Moses or the Prophets of the Old Testament.

This is rapture and those who have been through this rapture know one another. This is the point, that they recognise one another, just as those who do the same work know each other in the market. The glorified know each other in the same way, though for different reasons of course."

"Astronomers have the same truths wherever they are, and they accept one another's findings, provided they present photographs, measurements etc. In the same way, we have the history of the glorified, who all attained to glorification and had the same experience of God. They all have the same teaching, perhaps with some differences in terminology. And we accept their teaching."

The foundation of glorification is what is referred to as the 'ceaseless motion' of the glorified. This phrase refers to their experience which is not characterised as a fixed state but as a continuous growth

in perfection. The Fathers of the Church, such as St Dionysios the Areopagite and St Maximos the Confessor, who interprets his writings, reject the idea of immobility, because they believe in continuously increasing perfection, unceasing upward progress from glory to glory. On this issue too there is a difference from classical Greek philosophy, which believed in immutability.

Orthodox theologians, who have personal experience of God, always have the same theology. They do not change it as philosophers do.

> "Those who philosophise change the tradition on account of rational schemes that they devise. They rely more on their reason than on the experience of the glorified. They conceive something rationally and regard it as identical to the reality about God. All the heresies start from this sort of incorrect basis."

There are glorified people who have participated in the uncreated energy of God in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. There are also, of course, significant differences between them. The Prophets in the Old Testament, who attained to the vision of the unincarnate Word, were glorified. The people regarded the Prophets as authorities.

The Honourable Forerunner, who was the connecting link between the Old and New Testaments, reached glorification. "He is the last glorified Prophet" of the Old Testament, "but also the first who bore witness concerning the incarnation of the Word".

After the incarnation of the Word the situation changed, as the glorified saw the incarnate Word. The human nature of Christ is also a source of uncreated Light, as the glorified behold the glory of God while they themselves are within the Light. The same happens at Pentecost.

> "After the incarnation, in the experience of glorification, the centre of the experience of glorification, since Pentecost, is the human nature of Christ and the experience of glorification is always accompanied by the human nature of Christ. The glorified see Christ, because it is impossible for someone to see the Father unless he sees the Father in Christ. And this divine vision is accompanied by the human nature of Christ."

The glorified are to be found both in the Old and New Testaments.

The difference is that in the Old Testament the Word has not yet taken a body. The glorified received temporary glorification and were not delivered from the power of death, so they were led to Hades. More will be said on this issue below. What is clear is that the glorified are the foundation of the life of the Church.

Whereas in the patristic tradition the experience of the glorified serves as the foundation of ecclesiastical life and of the faith, in the Western tradition other things form the foundation and criteria of the faith.

One criterion in Western theology is human reason, which is put at the centre of teaching and the faith.

> "Augustine completely ignores the glorified. Augustine has no idea about the glorified and he never had any idea about glorification. He believed that human reason could know God directly, without the experience of glorification."

This was so because he believed that illuminated reason knew the archetypes of beings, which were unchangeable realities. Such was his faith, because he was influenced by the theories of Neoplatonism.

> "He believed that the enlightened reason, *illuminatio*, even if it does not have direct knowledge of the archetypes, has indirect knowledge of them. How does it have indirect knowledge of the archetypes? Through created things, through Holy Scripture, since there is a similarity between created things and the archetypes; because every created thing has an archetype. The archetype is the unchangeable reality. It is the unchangeable idea. And every created thing resembles its archetype, its essence, which is in the world perceptible to the nous.
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> So man's soul, pondering on the copies, remembers the archetypes. When his reason is illumined in this way, he acquires knowledge of the archetypes, while he is in the body."

This is linked with the fact that blessed Augustine believed that in the saints the desiring and incensive aspects of the soul cease to exist, and only illuminated reason functions. In this way speculation was introduced into theological issues and the glorification of the whole human being, soul and body, was ignored.

> "Here we have the most basic elements of Augustine's system. The weakest point in Augustine's thought is that Augustine did not know how to deal with subjects historically. He had no idea about the historical method used by the Fathers of the Church. He treated subjects speculatively, in a philosophical way, and not empirically. In his writings there is no spiritual experience of things, only speculation on all theological subjects."

Therefore, the glorified, who participate in the uncreated illuminating and glorifying energy of God, are the true theologians and the basis of ecclesiastical life. When we speak about the glorified we mean the Prophets, the Apostles and the Fathers of the Church.

2. The Unity of the Prophets, Apostles and Saints

Down through the centuries the glorified have been described as saints, because they are united in the Holy Spirit with Christ and through Him they know the Father, by means of His uncreated glorifying energy. The saints are "recipients, guardians and transmitters of the deposit of the Holy Tradition" and are divided into "the spiritually knowledgeable and the faithful". The spiritually knowledgeable are those who have acquired personal knowledge of God. They have come to know "the glory and energy of God" and have been "eye witnesses of the divinity of Christ". These are the Prophets, Apostles and saints. The faithful are those who, in the Holy Spirit, accept "with childlike simplicity, the testimony and the teaching of the saints who see God."

The Prophets, Apostles and saints are "at the centre of the Holy Tradition". They are "friends and eye-witnesses of the divinity of Christ", because "they have participated and participate in the mystery of His Cross and Resurrection", which changed them from enemies into servants and hired workers, and subsequently into friends of God.

The glorified saints "see and hear and converse with the uncreated energies of God, that is, with the glory, the bright cloud, the pillar of fire, the divinity, the glory and rule (*vasileia*) and the grace of God, by means of the vision that surpasses vision, the hearing that surpasses hearing, the taste that surpasses taste, the sense of touch that surpasses touch, the sense of smell that surpasses smell, the knowledge that surpasses knowledge, the understanding that surpasses understanding" and so on. That is to say, they participate in the uncreated glorifying energy of God with their body as well, which has, however, been previously transformed by the grace of God, since, as Holy Scripture says, *"In Your light we shall see light".*

Everyone speaks about God, even philosophers. But when someone uses his reason and imagination to understand God, then that god is

imaginary and consequently non-existent. The only God Who exists is the God of the Prophets, Apostles and saints.

> "Which God exists? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For the Fathers the only God who exists is the God Who appeared to the Prophets, Apostles and saints of the Church."

The only way of obtaining real knowledge of God is through glorification in the Holy Spirit.

> "Glorification is the foundation of the knowledge of God possessed by the Prophets, Apostles and saints of the Church."

For that reason, if we are going to speak about God and do not have personal experience of our own, we use the experience of the saints who have seen God.

> "The only source of knowledge of God is the glorified, who know God directly by experience. The experience of these glorified people is the foundation of correct faith concerning God. The glorified saint knows God directly. Subsequently he passes on to us things about God, so we know about God from him.
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> The Prophets, Apostles and saints of the Church are our authority with regard to God. We have faith in God through these people. We cannot have direct experience concerning God, unless we have reached the stage of illumination and union or glorification in our spiritual life."

In order for the saints to reach the vision of God, they must, of course, first pass through the experience of purification and illumination, as "the exact knowledge of God that we have as Orthodox originates from the experience of purification, illumination and glorification of the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers of the Church. We have no other source."

Participation in the purifying and illuminating grace of God, which culminates in glorifying grace, is the fruit of the hesychastic life. For that reason all the Prophets, Apostles and saints were hesychasts.

> "On account of Symeon the New Theologian biblical anthropology was preserved and passed on to future generations. It was continued by the so-called hesychasts, who are certainly not a

phenomenon of the 13th and 14th centuries, because Holy Scripture itself, the Prophets of the Old Testament are hesychasts, the whole apostolic period is hesychasm, and this tradition continues through all the Fathers of the Church."

When the Prophets, Apostles and saints attained to the vision of God, they acquired knowledge of the distinction between essence and energy in God. To be sure, during the vision of God no voice was heard telling them that this is the essence and this is the energy. They understood the distinction, however, because at that moment they shared in the energy of God and not in His essence. Thus the distinction between God's essence and His energy is not philosophical but empirical. Some people discuss the distinction between essence and energy in God in a philosophical and speculative way. Such an approach is not Orthodox; it is the method used by heretics.

"Apart from the philosophical distinction between essence and energy in God, there is another distinction between essence and energy in God in history. There is the Orthodox distinction, which is based on the experience of glorification. This is the distinction made by the Prophets, Apostles and saints. This is the distinction that forms part of the Tradition. Apart from this distinction, there was also a distinction between essence and energy made by heretics in the early Church."

What sets the Fathers of the Church apart from philosophers and heretics is their empirical knowledge of the distinction between God's essence and His energy. Then the God-seers and witnesses of God's divinity theologise in order to direct the faithful to glorification and personal experience, and in this way theology is produced. So this shared experience of the Prophets, Apostles, Fathers and saints is the foundation of Orthodox theology.

"Theology springs from the vision of God granted to the Prophets, Apostles, saints and so on: to all those who have reached the state of being glorified."

"This experience that the Prophets, Apostles and saints of the Church possess is the foundation of theology and it is the only secure and real bridge between God and man."

Infallibility, divine inspiration and glorification depend on this experience in both the Old and New Testaments.

> "Infallibility, divine inspiration and glorification in the Old and New Testaments and in the Church do not belong indiscriminately to the whole people of God, but reach the people and dwell in them by the energy of the Holy Spirit through those who are glorified, the Prophets, Apostles and saints, as well as through the clergy, who have the apostolic succession through ordination and the true teaching of the glorified in Christ."

Anyone who does not have his own experience of the vision of God and does not rely on the experience of the God-seeing saints, who represent authority within the Church, is deluded, because he is forced to philosophise and imagine God, with terrible consequences.

We shall look separately in the following sections at the Prophets, Apostles, Fathers and saints.

3. Prophets

The Prophets are included among the God-seeing saints, who are and are called glorified. Prophets are those saints who foretell future events, but also those who teach the mysteries of the glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God, which they know personally. This presupposes, however, spiritual life on an exalted level and an intense experience of divine grace. The term Prophet is used, therefore, to describe the saint who has communion with God, knows His will by revelation, has arrived at glorification and becomes an authoritative teacher of the people.

The righteous in the Old Testament, who were sent by God to guide people in the true path of salvation, are called Prophets in this sense. It was customary for the Prophet to say to God Who was calling him: "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears", and subsequently he would preach to the people: "Thus says the Lord". The people called these holy men 'seers' and 'beholders', because they saw the uncreated glory of God. They revealed God's will to those who were receptive to this revelation.

a) The Prophets of the Old and New Testaments

In the Old Testament we see the appearance of the Prophets and their words. They are the leaders of the people. We ought not to regard the Old Testament as simply a historical book, because the Patriarchs and Prophets had reached glorification.

> "Anyone who reads the Old Testament carefully to see who these Patriarchs and Prophets were, will see something strange. In the lives of the saints, as well as in the New Testament, a Patriarch or Prophet is someone who has reached glorification - the Fathers call glorification divine vision - who has passed through purification and has arrived at illumination."

All the Prophets had spiritual experience. They were not people who had developed their capacity for rational thought, conjecture and imagination, as had the philosophers who existed even in their era.

> "In the Old Testament there are men called Prophets and these Prophets had a specific experience. This experience is described, as far as this is possible, in the Old Testament. We find something similar in the New Testament. Afterwards, the preaching of the Prophets and Apostles is also linked with this experience of theirs, as is the entire method that they use to try and introduce the faithful to the same experience."

The starting point of their spiritual experience is the energy of ceaseless noetic prayer in the heart.

> "The fiftieth Psalm, in the patristic tradition, concerns noetic prayer, which means that David had noetic prayer and the Prophets had noetic prayer. Noetic prayer is not the discovery of Symeon the New Theologian or Gregory Palamas. It also exists in the Old Testament, according to the Fathers of the Church."

The Prophets in the Old Testament reached glorification, which in the language of the holy Fathers is identified with *theosis*. By glorification we mean the vision of the uncreated glory of the unincarnate Word. This glorification of the Prophets was temporary.

> "The experience of *theosis* and glory is a temporary state, because although they had this experience, in spite of all this, they died and were resurrected when Christ descended into Hades. The Prophets of the Old Testament were raised up again. We have the icon of the Resurrection of Christ, which clearly shows the teaching of the Fathers on this subject."

Participation in this glorification is called *theosis*. The Prophets of the Old Testament attained to glorification, but without yet being united with the human nature of Christ, which had not yet been assumed by the Word.

> "The Fathers of our Fathers in the Old Testament, that is to say, the Prophets, have glorification without Christ's human nature. Later the Apostles also have glorification, with Christ's human nature."

This experience of the Prophets is above created words and concepts. We have the created words and concepts of the Prophets, which we read in the Old Testament, but we also have the actual experience of the Prophets.

> "For the Fathers of the Church, all the Prophets had arrived at glorification and all the words in the Old Testament are created words and convey created concepts. But apart from the created words and created concepts there is also the Prophets' experience of glorification, and this experience is not these words and concepts."

By means of their glorification, the Prophets were reconciled with God and became His friends. From the stage of being servants they progressed to the stage of being hired workers, and then to friendship with God. It can be concluded from this that the Prophets acquired perfection, which consists of unselfish love, love that *"does not seek its own"* (1 Cor. 13:5).

It is significant that St Gregory Palamas associates the experience of the glory of Christ granted to the First Martyr Stephen and the saints of the New Testament with the experience of glorification that Moses had in the Old Testament.

Although the Prophets of the Old Testament attained to *theosis*-glorification-perfection, they did not obtain salvation, as they were not delivered from death. Victory over death came about through the Cross and Resurrection of Christ.

> "In the Old Testament we have these experiences of glorification of the Prophets, who arrive at the vision of God. This divine vision is the Prophets' glorification but it is not accompanied by salvation, because they are subject to death, just like everyone else, and die. They are resurrected on the day of Christ's Crucifixion, the day of His Descent into Hades.
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> From then onwards we have the resurrection of the Prophets, and there is the communion of saints beyond the grave. They had glorification this side of the grave, not beyond the grave. Now, after the Resurrection of Christ, they have glorification, because they participate in the first Resurrection."

This is why the Prophets represent authority for the people of God.

The faithful accept them so that they too may be led to the vision of God. They are true spiritual fathers and this is how spiritual children are acquired. Spiritual fatherhood is not a mechanical state. It is not a formal relationship but the mystery of man's rebirth and glorification.

> "In the Old Testament there is all the teaching about authority. Why does the Prophet have authority? Because he has direct knowledge of God. The people believe because they have confidence in the experience that the glorified have of God. They accept the authority of the glorified, that is to say, the Prophets, those who are illuminated and all who are in this empirical state. They accept them as spiritual fathers and follow them. Thus they accepted Moses and thus they accepted all the Prophets.
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> Afterwards we see that these Prophets in the Old Testament also had disciples, spiritual children. And what do they do with their spiritual children? They lead them to illumination and glorification. This is obvious. The entire relationship between spiritual fathers and spiritual children is completely clear in the Old Testament. That is why in the Sacraments of the Church we also call upon the prayers of the Prophets of the Old Testament. The prayers of the Sacrament of Confession, of Repentance, mention David with Nathan the Prophet. We repeat the same thing with the Sacraments today..."

The Prophets in the Old Testament saw the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the unincarnate Word, as all the divine manifestations in the Old Testament were a revelation of the Word without flesh.

There are not only Prophets in the Old Testament but also in the New Testament. The notion of 'Prophet', which was analysed above, is also applied to the Apostles and Fathers of the New Testament. The Honourable Forerunner, who is the connecting link between the Old and New Testaments, is also included among the Prophets.

> "The last Prophet of the Old Testament who was glorified was the Forerunner, who is the last glorified Prophet, but also the first who bore witness concerning the incarnation of the Word Who appeared to the Prophets of the Old Testament. We have the connecting link between the Old and New Testaments, not with texts, but with the living testimony of the experience of glorification."

A passage from St Paul describes the gifts of grace that exist within the Church: *"And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?"* (1 Cor. 12:28-30).

The Prophets of the early Church are the glorified bishops in the New Testament. The bishops in the early Church were chosen from among the glorified, the Prophets.

The Prophets in the New Testament are also referred to as Apostles and 'divinely-called'.

> "On the subject of who is a Prophet we shall read the fourteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. There we shall see what Prophets are. After that we shall read the fifteenth chapter, and other Epistles of St Paul, in order to see that Prophets are the same as Apostles. Just as the Apostles saw Christ in glory, so the Prophet is someone who has seen Christ in glory.
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> Anyone who sees God in glory becomes a Prophet, and in the early Church he is said to be 'divinely-called'. Someone is divinely-called if God has appeared to him and he has been called directly by God, as was the Apostle Paul."

The Apostles in the early Church did not have specific dioceses, like the Prophet-bishops, but had jurisdiction over all the dioceses. Later this spiritual state was lost. The bishops lost the prophetic gift and were unable to carry out the work of Prophets, which is the pastoral guidance of the faithful so that they may reach glorification.

> "It is clear from the actual lists of bishops that Peter is not a bishop. He is an Apostle. An Apostle does not have a diocese; an Apostle was for all the dioceses and founded dioceses. That is why the Apostle Paul says, 'First Apostles, second Prophets', and not, 'second bishops'. Why does he say 'Prophet'? 'Prophet' does not signify a liturgical office. 'Bishop' means a spiritual state. It is someone who has reached glorification. Next comes the teacher, and so on.
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> The interpretation that the bishop is someone who has reached glorification comes from St Dionysios the Areopagite, and is a commentary on the Apostle Paul. He is interpreting St Paul on this

subject and draws this conclusion. This is also obvious from the entire Tradition. We have Symeon the New Theologian who says that today there are some bishops who, in the time of the Apostle Paul, would have been the laymen who said the 'Amen'. They would not have been bishops in that era."

When discussing Prophets in the Old and New Testaments, we pointed out above the difference between them. The Prophets of the Old Testament saw the unincarnate Word, whereas the Prophets of the New Testament saw the incarnate Word. This is the basic difference between the Old and New Testaments.

"What is the difference between the Old and New Testaments? First of all we said that it was the incarnation. Every Prophet received a revelation of Christ Himself, the unincarnate Christ, before He became Christ, when He was only the Angel of the Lord, the Word, as He became Christ by the incarnation."

Later, the Prophet of the New Testament is a member of the Body of Christ and sees God in the flesh of Christ. Glorification is permanent and unchanging. The Church is the Body of the risen Christ and anyone who lives united with the Body of Christ experiences victory over death.

b) The Prophetic Gift

The gift of prophecy is not simply a vision but a special spiritual state. When the Apostle Paul refers to prophecy, he links it with interpretation and teaching, and regards this teaching as a major spiritual gift. He writes: *"Desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy...he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification"* (1 Cor. 14:1-5).

By 'speaking in tongues' he means noetic prayer and by prophesying he means interpretation.

"The wonderful thing is that the Apostle Paul is speaking to a parish and says *'I wish you all spoke with tongues...that you prophesied'*. That you would all be Prophets of the Old Testament, that you would be interpreters. That you would acquire noetic prayer so that you could interpret. We therefore have the phenomenon that there are monks who, although illiterate by worldly standards, have spirituality. They read the Psalms and the Old Testament and interpret them afterwards."

The prophetic gift is interpretative and the interpretation of Holy Scripture has no connection at all with conjectural and academic analyses.

"*'Let him...pray that he may interpret'* (1 Cor. 14:13) means 'let him pray that he may prophesy'. The prophetic gift is a gift of interpretation. Teachers of Holy Scripture who undertake interpretation should note this point. The interpretation of Holy Scripture is a gift of grace according to the Apostle Paul."

There is certainly a close link between the two gifts: the gift of 'speaking in tongues' (noetic prayer) and the gift of teaching without error.

"The gift of prophecy arises from the gift of 'speaking in tongues'. Anyone who has the one has the other too. One depends on the other, and St Paul says, *'I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues'* (1 Cor. 14:5). This is not absolute, however. He does not say categorically that he is greater, because he adds, *'unless indeed he interprets'*.

But who interprets? The same one who 'speaks in tongues' ought to interpret. What is this interpretation? It is prophecy; the interpretation itself is prophecy. Look once more: *'I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets.'* The one who speaks in tongues ought to interpret. When he says 'interpret' here he means that he should prophesy, *'that the church may receive edification.'* "

The *'face to face'* vision of God is superior to the prophetic gift. Prophetic teaching is the radiance of the vision of God.

> "For someone to know God by experience is higher than the prophetic gift. This is what is meant by *'face to face'* (1 Cor. 13:12): we know God *'face to face'*, as the Apostle Paul clearly tells us, *'face to face'*.
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> Someone who knows God *'face to face'* and has unceasing prayer within him has 'speaking in tongues'. Why? So that he may prophesy. From then on he reads the Old Testament and sees everywhere in the Psalms, everywhere, everywhere, he sees Christ, Who is in communion with the Prophets."

The fact that at Pentecost *"all truth"* was revealed means that prophecy is not simply the revelation of things to come, which have already been revealed, but the interpretation of the prophecy of the Prophets. Someone who has noetic prayer in his heart, which is the continuation of the gift of 'speaking in tongues', can correctly interpret the Prophets.

> "Cyril of Alexandria interprets the term 'prophecy' for us in detail and says that prophecy no longer concerns things that are to happen in the future, as the events that they prophesied would happen in the future have happened; all of them have taken place."
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> "Unfortunately St Cyril of Alexandria's complete interpretation of these extracts has not survived, but enough survives for us to understand, so to speak, how he interprets them.
>
> First of all he stresses the difference between Pentecost and here (in Corinth), because at Pentecost the hearers heard and understood, whereas here they heard nothing. So he stresses this point. Chrysostom tends to believe that the 'speaking in tongues' (at Corinth) was the same as the 'speaking in tongues' at Pentecost. So there is a difference between Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandra. The strange thing is that in Chrysostom's writings there is noetic prayer; the practice of noetic prayer is in Chrysostom's tradition. I do not know how this differentiation arose, but it seems that here – whether or not it is speaking in tongues as at Pentecost – it is noetic prayer. Do you follow me? Whether they hear or not, the fact it is noetic prayer is clear from here, regardless of speaking in tongues. Why?

Because *'Pray with the spirit,'* is different from *'Pray with the understanding'*. This, it seems, is why the Liturgy came to be called rational worship, reasonable sacrifice. It is the reasonable sacrifice, rational worship, because the public Divine Eucharist of the Church takes place by means of human reason, as it is offered with voices and so on. So even someone who does not have noetic prayer can take part and say 'Amen', and take Holy Communion. I think this is where this concept comes from."

It is significant that the Apostle Paul says that a time will come when prophecies will be abolished. He writes: *"Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away"* (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

"Someone who reaches illumination of the heart acquires the beginning of the change in man, and selfish love begins to turn into unselfish love, which comes when, as the Apostle Paul tells us, *'that which is perfect comes'*. When what is perfect comes, prophecy, tongues - meaning noetic prayer - are abolished, knowledge vanishes and what remains is love."

When someone reaches glorification-divine vision, for him at that moment interpretation of the Old Testament ceases, because then he sees Christ 'in His glory'. Then even noetic prayer is abolished.

"When he says that *'Prophecies will fail'*, he means that the energy of prophesying will cease in those who interpreted the Old Testament. This means that the interpretative method will be abolished. The aim of Holy Scripture is to lead man to the vision of God, to glorification, that he may see Christ in glory.

When someone sees Christ in glory, then 'prophecies' fail because he has the reality, Christ Himself, in front of him. From this point of view, for the glorified man, Holy Scripture is abolished. This does not mean that it is rendered useless, but it is abolished during the experience of glorification. Holy Scripture is useful for safeguarding the faithful, so that they too may be led to the experience of glorification.

'Tongues will cease.' During the experience of glorification noetic prayer ceases. The one who prays with his nous no longer prays. Prayer stops because it is replaced by the reality."

After the divine vision noetic prayer returns, since the vision of God is not permanent in this life.

There are Prophets in every era and every century. They are the true leaders of the people of God, because they speak from experience and without error. In Christ's parable on this subject, when the rich man in Hades asked Abraham to send Lazarus to preach repentance to his living relatives, Abraham replied, *"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them...If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'* (Luke 16:29-31).

In the next life, where there will be permanent experience of God, Holy Scripture will not exist. It will be completely abolished and will not be needed.

"When we have the permanent experience of glorification in the next life neither Holy Scripture nor noetic prayer nor theological knowledge nor dogmas will be needed."

4. Apostles

When Christ officially began His work He chose twelve Disciples, who lived with Him all the time. He taught them. He sent them out to preach, and for that reason they were described as Apostles ('those sent out'). It was these Apostles who continued His work after Pentecost.

Spending three years with Christ, the Apostles listened to teaching and saw miracles being worked. Some were accounted worthy to see Him transfigured on Mount Tabor. They shared in the Last Supper, were witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ and Pentecost. They became partakers in the Holy Spirit, and through Him members of the Risen Body of Christ.

a) The Life and Work of the Apostles

Through His incarnation, Christ becomes the new Moses Who leads the people of God in a different way. As the twelve tribes of Israel gathered round God through Moses, so now the twelve Apostles gather round Christ, through the incarnate Christ.

> "In the Old Testament the Word (Logos) communicates through the Prophet. Now He does so through His human nature. This is what happens. The Apostles assemble around the Word made flesh. Now we have the twelve Apostles, as we had the twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament. All the twelve tribes of Israel gathered around God through Moses and the people of the Old Testament was formed.
>
> Here, instead of Moses we now have Christ. Instead of the tabernacle of witness, which was the created image of the uncreated Law that Moses saw, is Christ Himself. Moses gave us the created Law, which is a tutor to bring us to the uncreated Law. There is no similarity between the two."

Christ becomes the Spiritual Father of the Apostles, Who prepares them and cures them appropriately so that they may be glorified and behold God and become divinely inspired.

> "Christ Himself becomes the Spiritual Father of the Apostles. Anyone who reads the New Testament sees that Christ is the Apostles' Spiritual Father. What does He do for them? He leads them from purification to illumination."

Through Christ, the Apostles progressed from purification to illumination and were exalted to glorification. They knew Christ in the flesh before His Ascension and they knew Him in the Spirit at Pentecost. There are not two separate Christs. Christ is one and the same, but the experience was different. We see this in the appearance of Christ to the two Disciples of John the Forerunner, who spent a day in the glory of God, but also on Mount Tabor during His Transfiguration, and after His Resurrection among His Disciples. Before Pentecost Christ's Disciples saw Him according to the flesh, and sometimes through the human flesh they saw rays of divine glory. After Pentecost, however, they see the God-man Christ in the Spirit within the Light.

> "This is why I think that the key to the whole question of the correct evaluation of the history of theology is understanding this distinction: Who Christ is according to the flesh, and Who Christ is according to the Spirit. Because someone knows Christ according to the flesh and sometimes someone knows Him spiritually. Are there two different Christs? No. There is one Christ. The Body is one. But all those who saw Him before the Ascension saw Him according to the flesh, and all those who see Him after Pentecost see Him according to the Spirit. For that reason the Apostle Paul also saw Christ spiritually and not in the flesh. He knew Him according to the Spirit. That is the key to the patristic interpretation, that He will send another Comforter, Who will lead us into *'all truth'* (John 16:13)."

When Christ related the familiar parable of the Sower, His Disciples asked Him to explain its meaning. Then Christ said, *"To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom* [*vasileia* in Greek] *of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that 'Seeing they may*

not see, and hearing they may not understand'" (Luke 8:8-10). We see from this that knowing the mysteries of the glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God is not the same as being taught through parables. The Apostles obviously belong to the first category.

"Christ makes a distinction and says that those outside are taught through parables, but to the Apostles it is granted *'to know the mysteries of the kingdom* [*vasileia*] *of God'*. Teaching *'in parables'* is something quite different from being taught *'the mysteries of the kingdom* [*vasileia*] *of God'*. It is not the same thing at all. So Christ teaches the multitude *'in parables'*, but to the Apostles He reveals the mysteries of the glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God in teaching.

The mysteries of the glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God are the specific subject-matter of the fourth Gospel. The Gospel according to John concerns the mysteries of the glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God. It is a mystagogical and dogmatic Gospel and there are parables in the other three synoptic Gospels. For that reason, John's Gospel does not concern itself very much with the devil, nor does it spend much time on parables. There are very few parables, almost none, in the Gospel according to John. This is reflected in Christ's teaching in the synoptic Gospels which says, *'To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom* [*vasileia*] *of God'* and to those outside, *'in parables'*. The distinction is very clear.

Apart from this, there is a clear distinction between 'knowing the mysteries of the kingdom [*vasileia*] of God' and 'seeing the kingdom [*vasileia*] of God'. Christ teaches *'the mysteries of the kingdom* [*vasileia*] *of God'* with words. Afterwards, however, Christ makes a promise to the Apostles, saying, *'There are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom* [*vasileia*] *of God present with power'* (Mark 9:1). In the three synoptic Gospels the Transfiguration follows immediately and is the justification of this promise. What did the three chosen Apostles see at the Transfiguration? They saw the glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God. Throughout the patristic tradition the glory of God is the glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God. This revelation of the glory of God in the Transfiguration is exactly the same revelation of Christ as in the Old Testament."

During the illumination of Christ on Mount Tabor, the three Disciples were within the Light. The Light poured forth from Christ's flesh, but this flesh was outside the Disciples, as Pentecost had not yet taken place. This is the difference between the Transfiguration and Pentecost. In both cases the Disciples attained to theoria of the Light. At the Transfiguration, however, the Body of Christ was outside the Disciples, whereas from Pentecost onwards the Disciples were members of the Risen Body of Christ.

At Pentecost the Disciples became members of the Body of Christ, so the Body of Christ acted from within them. After Pentecost the holy Apostles lived in the glory of Christ, in the uncreated Light. They received this Light and shone as light in the world. Christ is Light by nature; the Apostles had this Light by participation. Christ 'works' glorification; the Apostles 'undergo' glorification. When Christ said to His Disciples, *"You are the light of the world"* (Matt. 5:14), He did not say it in a moralistic, sentimental and conventional sense, but in reality. They had the Holy Spirit within them. They had inner noetic prayer and had attained to theoria of the Light. This is the meaning of Christ's words to His Disciples, *"You are the light of the world."*

> "I hear sermons now saying that all Christians are the light of the world. What do you mean by the light of the world? What light of the world? When Christ says, *'You are the light of the world'* and so on, He means that now, now, now you are illuminated, you are the light of the world. Because they have become burning candles, they have unceasing remembrance of God within them, they have reached glorification in specific cases. For that reason they are the light of the world. Not that everyone is the light of the world."

The Apostles were not wise according to the flesh – in a worldly sense – and their theology was not the result of their intellectual ability. They were not philosophers but theologians in the absolute sense of the term.

> "Among the Apostles there is not a single philosopher who is concerned with the philosophical method of investigation."

The Apostles became divinely inspired through the experience of Pentecost. Divine inspiration is not something temporary. The Apos-

tles were not divinely inspired only at the time when they were writing the Epistles. They were divinely inspired on account of their vision of God before they wrote the Epistles.

> "Was the Apostle Paul divinely inspired before he picked up his pen to write the Epistle to the Romans, and did he cease to be divinely inspired when he wrote Amen at the end?"

He was divinely inspired because he participated in the glory of God and theology issued from his very being. The Apostles were divinely inspired from the day of Pentecost onwards, and everything they did was the fruit and result of glorification.

b) Apostolic Life, Tradition and Succession

Everything set out above makes clear what constitutes the apostolic life, tradition and succession. It is participation in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Anyone who lives in the perspective of glorification experiences the revelatory tradition, whereas anyone outside this perspective falls into theological errors. Truth lies in divine vision.

> "Someone can have a vague idea about God, but as long as he is outside the prophetic and apostolic tradition of the saints, this vague idea about God that he may have is full of errors. There can be no knowledge of God free from errors in those who are outside the tradition of glorification.
>
> In the tradition of glorification, he who reaches glorification, divine vision, sees God, precisely because he becomes god by grace. He receives from God the gift of uncreated eyes with which he sees God. The Fathers undertake detailed interpretation of the phrase, *'In Your light we shall see light'*."

Man is transfigured by the grace of God and sees the glory of Christ. This is "the gift of uncreated eyes". He does not lose his senses, but his whole being, body and soul, is transformed. Everyone who shares in the Mystery of Pentecost becomes an Apostle. By the grace of God, man can ascend to the height of divine vision and participate in Pentecost.

We can see St Paul's call to apostolic rank in this perspective, but

also the experience of Cornelius (Acts ch. 10 and 11) and St Symeon the New Theologian. Pentecost continues in history.

> "What is the difference between Symeon the New Theologian and Cornelius? How can we evaluate Cornelius? Was St Symeon greater than Cornelius or inferior to Cornelius? What was he? Holy Scripture itself tells us that Cornelius had *'the same gift'* as the Apostles at Pentecost (Acts 11:17). *'The same gift'* means not only the same grace, but grace to the same degree. Equal grace, what does that mean in Greek? It was not unequal grace but equal grace, the same grace and to the same degree. He did not have an inferior share, we could express it like that, an inferior share of grace, but, it says, *'the same gift'*. That is what Luke says in the Acts of the Apostles. Is that not so? Why? Because before Cornelius was baptised he had the same experience as the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Scripture says so. Before he was baptised. Is that not the case?
>
> Did the Apostle Paul go up to the third heaven after baptism or before baptism? Before baptism, on the road to Damascus. He was blinded and stayed for a long time in the Arabian desert. Later he was in this state of glorification, by reason of which he had been blinded, because he saw only the Light and Christ. He saw nothing else. They had to lead him. He was not physically blinded. He was blinded by the Light. If an ophthalmologist had examined him during that period he would have said that the man had nothing wrong with him."

In this perspective we should also mention the apostolic succession. The bishops are successors of the holy Apostles, not only by a series of ordinations, but because they share in the same apostolic life and have beheld Christ in His glory.

> "The fact that the bishops were called saints, a convention that has continued to this day, originates from the Tradition. This is clear from St Dionysios the Areopagite, who divides the clergy into three orders: deacons, priests and bishops.
>
> He continues the ancient tradition of the Apostle Paul, who clearly explains to us that the Apostles are those who have arrived

at glorification or *theosis*: they have been glorified. Christ was in His glory and all the Apostles were witnesses of Christ after the Resurrection, and because these men saw Christ in glory after the Resurrection, they were called Apostles. In this way they became Apostles. They are divinely-called, because they were made Apostles directly by God. The Apostle Paul tells us that he was made an Apostle by Christ Himself. Not by the other Apostles. Why? Because Christ Himself appeared to the Apostle Paul, and this appearance to Paul made him - ordained him - an Apostle. Later on, Prophets in the Apostle Paul's writings are the same as Apostles, with the difference that the Prophet does not wander from place to place like the Apostles, founding churches here and there, but is in a parish.

So when the Apostle Paul says, *"God has appointed...first apostles, second prophets"* (1 Cor. 12:28), these Prophets, as we know from the period of the Apostles, are the bishops of the early Church. These bishops have been appointed by God, because they have attained to glorification. They too have seen Christ in glory, so they are referred to as Prophets, and later they are called bishops of the Church."

The apostolic succession is not only the grace to perform the Sacraments, but also to be a spiritual father and to cure, because "the essence of the apostolic succession and the apostolic tradition" is that someone can only be made a spiritual father by a spiritual father. By extension, the bishop "is the spiritual father in the highest sense and the bearer of the Church's diagnostic and therapeutic tradition."

"What does the apostolic succession mean for us? It means not only the consecration of bishops, but also the purpose for which the bishop is consecrated. This is not the same thing. Nowadays we equate the apostolic succession with the consecration of the bishop. There is nothing magical about the consecration of the bishop. The bishop is consecrated for a purpose. For what purpose? To diagnose and to cure. Why does a doctor become a doctor? We appoint someone as a doctor. Why do we appoint him as a doctor? Because he has become a doctor; he has become a doctor, so we appoint him as a doctor."

For this reason the early Fathers spoke less about the apostolic succession than about the apostolic tradition, which is the diagnosis and treatment of illness.

> "So what is the apostolic tradition? The early Fathers spoke about the apostolic tradition, not about the apostolic succession. The apostolic tradition is the tradition of diagnosis and treatment, and the clergy existed for that purpose. They diagnosed and treated correctly. Nothing else. There is no other purpose."

The meaning of this apostolic tradition is clear from the fact that the Church functions as a spiritual hospital. The clergy are spiritual physicians and all those who are in the state of illumination are nursing staff in the spiritual hospital.

> "It seems to me that the Church resembles a hospital which, in the time of the Apostles, had an Apostle as its director. The staff of the hospital were Prophets, who all had the experience of glorification."

When, however, the Church, including the clergy, became secularised, this apostolic life and tradition of treatment passed to monasticism. For that reason monasteries were at first called hospitals or therapeutic centres. Once the clergy became secularised and lost this apostolic tradition, the monks became the Apostles of the earliest period, because they are illuminated and have unceasing noetic prayer, and in essence that is the apostolic life.

> "The monks took over the role of those who are illuminated within the Church. For that reason, the old university that had been in every parish in the apostolic era continued to be there, and every parish had a bishop, who had reached, if not glorification, at least illumination. He had passed through purification and had continuous inner remembrance of God.
>
> When the first great fall in the priesthood came about in this respect – again I stress that it was not a moral fall: these were virtuous men who were not in this state of purification and illumination of the nous and heart – the university was moved from the parishes to the monasteries, and monasticism developed. Monasticism is not a new phenomenon in the Church. Monasticism existed in every parish,

because every Christian was a monk in the early Church. For that reason monasticism was generally called the apostolic life. That is how it was referred to in the early Church: the apostolic life. The monk lives the apostolic way of life.

What is meant by the apostolic life? It does not mean that he is someone who does good works and runs around acting as the saviour of society and of economics and politics. No. He is someone who is in this state of constant remembrance of God. St Basil the Great states very clearly that someone is a temple of God when his constant remembrance of God is not interrupted by everyday cares."

Monasticism is the apostolic life because, apart from anything else, monks practise shared ownership and live in the same way as the Apostles.

"Anyone who looks at the Acts of the Apostles will see there that the apostolic community, as it tells us very plainly, *'had all things in common'* (Acts 2:44). Anyone who wanted to be baptised had to give what he had to the common treasury of the parish. No one had anything personal, everything was shared.

We know the familiar example of Ananias and his wife, who told lies and said that they had given everything to the common treasury of the Church. The outcome was that the one died first, because he lied, and afterwards the other came and fell down dead too. It was the Holy Spirit Himself Who caused their downfall. So great does the apostolic community's 'mania' for shared ownership appear to have been.

Some people assert that this was only for the apostolic Church. But if you read *The Ancestral Sin*, the book I published, I have information from Justin Martyr, who says to the Gentiles that we Christians have everything in common. We should consider that Justin Martyr died towards the end of the 2nd century and that he is not aware of any parish of Christians that did not have everything in common. He sends this fact as information to the idolaters, that all Christians have everything in common.

This means that it is an established custom that endured for at

least two hundred years and possibly longer, and then began to collapse. When it began to collapse, monasticism appears. And when monasticism appears, it is called the apostolic life. That is to say, the monks live the apostolic life, with everything in common."

Monasticism, therefore, is not a new institution which was added later to the life of the Church. It is a continuation of the apostolic life. The new element which was introduced in monasticism was celibacy-virginity.

"Monasticism is called the apostolic life in ancient times. It is called the apostolic life because it is not a new institution for the Fathers of the Church, but a continuation of apostolic practice. The only new thing that appears in monasticism is celibacy. That is new. In everything else it is the apostolic life, nothing else. The Apostle Peter was married. Some of them were not. There was at least one who was married, that is what we want to say."

An apostolic era is any era in which true hesychasts live, who know by experience what is meant by purity from thoughts (*logismoi*), noetic hesychia, constant remembrance of God, illumination and glorification.

Pentecost is the highest degree of divine revelation, which makes those who share in it Apostles. The apostolic life, therefore, exists in every phase of the life of the Church, whenever there are glorified people and God-seers. This is why the Church has laid down that the Feast of All Saints should be celebrated on the first day after the Sunday of Pentecost.

"We have the experience of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost and afterwards, the following Sunday, is the Sunday of All Saints. This is the aim of Pentecost: that those who are baptised should become saints. So we have purification before baptism, illumination until Pentecost, and afterwards we have the hope that we will reach glorification together with those whom we celebrate on the Sunday of All Saints."

5. Fathers

The successors of the holy Apostles were called Fathers, specifically Apostolic Fathers, and the successors of the latter were described as Fathers of the Church. Essentially the Fathers are the bridge that unites the apostolic era with every ecclesiastical era. The Church, therefore, is referred to as apostolic because it is patristic.

The Fathers are not simply great scholars familiar with human learning and wisdom, but people who had received the Holy Spirit, participated in the glorifying energy of God, acquired existential knowledge of God and formulated it by means of the particular gifts and training that they had.

a) The Work of the Fathers

The patristic era is the apostolic era in every era. It relates to the unceasing energy of the Holy Spirit within the Church. Essentially, the apostolic and patristic era is ecclesiastical life.

How do the Fathers differ from the Apostles?

> "We need to identify the main characteristics of the apostolic era. What an Apostle is, what a parish is in the apostolic era. What theology is, what the purpose of theology is, what the gradations of theological understanding are. What the saints are, what the Fathers of the Church are, and what the difference is between Apostles and Fathers of the Church."

The Fathers of the Church are successors of the holy Apostles and share the same experience. They had personal experience and bore spiritual children, whom they brought to new birth in Christ. Their guidance and regeneration is linked with progress towards glorification. Basically this is the Orthodox pastoral ministry. In order for someone to guide his spiritual children towards glorification, he himself must be

personally familiar with this path, otherwise the pastoral ministry is exercised in an external and moralistic way. The Fathers are theologians in the Church, as they have reached illumination and glorification. The pastoral ministry must also be carried out in a theological manner.

> "The question arises, who is this Father of the Church? Why is he called a Father of the Church? Who are these saints and all these theologians and how do they theologise? This is an issue that requires very great care."

The Fathers of the Church reached the stage of experiencing the mystery of Pentecost. Divine inspiration is inseparably linked with Pentecost. "You ask yourself: Are only the writings of Holy Scripture divinely inspired, or also the writings of divinely inspired people in the course of history?" Surely the writings of the Fathers are also divinely inspired, because "the experience of Pentecost is also repeated after Pentecost".

The Fathers knew the teaching on the Holy Trinity, but, more importantly, the Fathers also knew the way to lead their spiritual children to the experience and knowledge of the Triune God.

> "There are those who know where they are going and how they will get there. They are the great Fathers of the Church, who knew the teaching concerning the Holy Trinity, but also knew the path."

The foundation of patristic theology is linked with the essence of ecclesiastical life, which specifically means purification, illumination and glorification. This is the context in which the teaching of the Fathers about society and social phenomena should be seen. Their teaching should not be examined from an ideological, speculative or sociological viewpoint. To understand the way in which the holy Fathers lived we should look at the way of life in contemporary Orthodox monasticism, which is purification, illumination and glorification.

> "In patristic theology, the foundations of the Orthodox perception with regard to the community, that is to say, the ecclesiastical community that finds its supreme expression today in monasticism, is purification, illumination and glorification."

Prayer, particularly noetic prayer, is proof that someone is at the stage of illumination, having previously passed the stage of purification,

and now he is on the way to divine vision. Then he is shown to be a theologian of the Church. An Orthodox theologian is someone who prays – especially, who prays with his nous – and is accounted worthy of divine experience. It is not a matter of theological speculation, but of expressing empirical life.

This is clear from the writings of the Fathers, particularly from their Orthodox anthropology. It is impossible for anyone who analyses patristic works to ignore this reality.

> "Without going back to the writings of the Fathers to look at their anthropology, to look at the foundations of their spirituality, to see what this state of illumination is according to the Fathers and what effects the state of illumination has on man's physical condition – with all those heroic acts that the monks undertook in the desert, on top of pillars, without food, while God kept them in a glorified state – it is impossible to understand what Orthodox theology is."
>
> "It is very dangerous for someone to study the patristic texts unless he has a clear idea of the context of the patristic tradition and also, if he imagines that the Fathers were speculative thinkers. The Fathers were not speculative thinkers."

The impression has been created that some Fathers who lived as ascetics in monasteries and deserts are 'neptic hesychast Fathers', whereas the others, whose ministry was in the world, are 'social Fathers'. However, "all the Fathers of the Church are theologians and hesychasts." All the Christians in the early Church, as is clear from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, were hesychasts. The Prophets in the Old Testament, as well as the Apostles and the Fathers in the life of the Church, were hesychasts. So the Fathers of the Church cannot be divided into 'great Fathers' and 'hesychast Fathers'. "All the Fathers were neptic and ascetic." "The ascetic tradition is the essence of Holy Scripture."

The Fathers had been cured themselves, they knew God and subsequently they cured people's spiritual illness. Patristic theology is spiritual medicine.

> "Patristic theology is full of medical images. We need only look at the troparia of the Church, at the services, and we see that they are full of such expressions as 'the doctor of our souls and bodies'.

> We present Christ Himself as a doctor, monasteries as hospitals, and spiritual fathers as doctors, not as moralistic fathers."

After the Fall man became spiritually sick. Mortality and liability to suffering entered his existence, and the powers of his soul and body function contrary to nature. This means that he requires treatment.

> "The Fathers of the Church are interested in the human being as he is at this very moment today, because he needs therapeutic treatment."

Patristic theology is a kind of psychiatry, but it obviously differs from contemporary psychiatry and actually supersedes it, because "it contains things that neither psychiatry nor psychology even imagines exists." Spiritual fathers are within the flow of the Tradition. They know God by experience and also help other people to share this experience. This is why spiritual fathers are identified with theologians, since spiritual fatherhood is connected with curing man's ailing personality.

> "What is Orthodoxy? It is an assembly of spiritual fathers, who know that everyone has this treasure of noetic energy within him. And what is the work of the spiritual father? Where there is a tiny spark on the coals, you take the bellows, you blow on it, and after a while it becomes a flame. That is his work. Someone who is illuminated and, because he is illuminated, knows how to illuminate others, takes someone else, takes the spark he has inside him and turns this spark into fire. Then he can progress as far as glorification.
>
> This is the work of the Church. However, the Church has developed and, instead of being an assembly of spiritual fathers, like a hospital that has, say, fifty doctors, two thousand years have passed and the hospital is without doctors. Those who are inside are called doctors but they cure nothing. We are in danger of reaching this point, and the only thing that can save us is to go back to the Fathers of the Church."

Spiritual fathers, as spiritual physicians, first make a spiritual diagnosis of the illness. Then the spiritual father helps his spiritual children to pass through purification and progress to illumination and glorification.

> The diagnosis is that "man's heart has been darkened". The treatment is "for thoughts (*logismoi*) to leave the heart and for one thought to remain, which is the constant remembrance of God, so that, when he works, reads, writes, walks, works in the factory, goes out shopping or even sleeps, prayer may function automatically within him. Then this prayer becomes independent of the rational grey matter, which is in the brain, and works continuously."

The experienced spiritual father knows the spiritual state of the Christian who is in the state of purification or illumination, and guides him appropriately. There are clear indications that someone has been cured, when he becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit and prays without ceasing. It is in this perspective that obedience should be discussed. Obedience is offered to the spiritual father, who knows this inner aspect of the spiritual life. Its aim is progress from purification to illumination and glorification.

> "Nowadays the meaning of obedience has become distorted. Someone teaches that the Fathers say that you should be obedient to a spiritual father. Yes, but to which spiritual father? That is the problem. You should not be obedient to just any spiritual father. If you are obedient to a spiritual father who has no idea at all about purification of the nous, you will certainly not acquire a purified nous. Your nous will never be purified."

Spiritual fatherhood is exercised in parallel with, and in combination with, the priesthood, because man makes spiritual progress through asceticism, but also through the sacramental life. In order to become a spiritual father someone must be spiritually reborn and have the grace of God within him.

> "Ordination was an act of the Church, by which the Church certified that someone was suitable to be a priest, as he had reached a certain level and so was also suitable to be a spiritual father. If, however, he had not reached that point and was not suitable to be a spiritual father, he could not be ordained as a priest or consecrated as a bishop."

The pre-eminent teacher and spiritual father in the Church is, of course, the bishop.

"We know very well that the bishop is the pre-eminent teacher and spiritual father in the Church. This is the bishop, and that is why the bishop was called Father. When they said 'Father' in the early Church, they did not mean the priests. They meant the bishops.

The bishops of the Church, as spiritual fathers, were called Fathers. When they took part in a Council or when they were made saints of the Church, they were called Fathers. This distinction between saints and Fathers does not exist in the Fathers. For the Fathers of the Church, the saints are Fathers, and the Fathers are saints. But the bishops are Fathers in the highest sense. Whereas today we call the bishop 'Your Excellence', 'Your Grace', 'Your Beatitude' and so on, in those days they called him 'Father'. He was the spiritual father."

In the context of this spiritual treatment, by which man's nous is to be cured, we should also look at the Fathers' teaching on social issues.

"We do not pray that illumination may take place in the life to come. All the striving for illumination is for this life. The change in human personality has to be in this life. Consequently, as the effort to change man's personality is made in this life, the implication is that the whole endeavour is also aimed at changing the social structure. The change is not restricted to the future life.

For this reason the Orthodox Fathers of the Church had a huge influence on the social issues of their age. For that reason, the legal system of Constantinople, the Roman legal system, reached great heights for its type and its time. No legal system can be compared with that of Constantinople, particularly in the years of Justinian and after Justinian."

b) The Divinely Inspired Theology of the Fathers

The writings of the Fathers are divinely inspired, as they were written by divinely inspired men. Divine inspiration in this case is not to the letter, but the saints had reached illumination and glorification, and when they spoke about dogmatic issues, they spoke from

experience. This is called divine inspiration. The two kinds of divine inspiration are illumination and glorification.

"The writings of the Fathers are also regarded as divinely inspired, as well as the writings of Holy Scripture. When we refer to divine inspiration, however, we ought first of all to define on which subjects one can be divinely inspired and how far divine inspiration goes.

First of all, as you know from other classes, Orthodox tradition has never accepted divine inspiration to the letter. Divine inspiration to the letter is not to be found in the Fathers, nor in the writings of Orthodox theologians of any tradition. Divine inspiration to the letter was never supported in the Orthodox Church, as happened in the Western tradition. This teaching about divine inspiration to the letter is not to be found either in the Fathers or in modern Orthodox theologians. It is, however, found in the West, mainly in the Middle Ages. Clarification is needed on this subject.

To begin with, in the Orthodox tradition the first stage of divine inspiration is the stage of illumination and the final stage is glorification. So the question arises, Why is the author who writes part of Holy Scripture regarded as being divinely inspired? Is it because he lived in the state of illumination and from time to time reached glorification, and wrote out of superabundance when he wrote and, as a consequence, wrote accurately about God? Or was it because when he wrote, at the very moment that he took up his pen, the Holy Spirit came to him like a cockerel, a dove or a little bird and sat there dictating what he should write?

According to the Fathers of the Church, someone is divinely inspired when he is in the state of illumination or glorification, and writes because he has this experience, and writes with divine inspiration. He does not write, however, on subjects that are unconnected with divine inspiration. Which subjects are connected with divine inspiration? All matters concerning God, the revelations of God to man, God's will for man, the incarnation, the manifestation of the uncreated glory of God through Christ's human nature, the founding of the Church at Pentecost, the 'Pentecostal' experience of glorification and this continuing experience of glorification and illumination

in the life of the Church. On these subjects there is divine inspiration and freedom from error."

In this case divine inspiration is a continuing state, as noetic prayer and as the vision of God.

"In the patristic tradition, divine inspiration is the only unerring perception that can exist in a human being and in this way it shapes his character, elevates human love, perfects purification and changes it gradually into glorification. Only this, according to the Fathers, is called divine inspiration. This divine inspiration is a continuing state.

It is foolish to suppose that someone is divinely inspired because he sat down to write an epistle to Rome, as did the Apostle Paul, and just as he was writing, the Holy Spirit miraculously came and guided his pen at that moment to write a letter. No, this is not what happens. Divine inspiration means that the one writing is in the state of unceasing prayer and moves in and out of the state of glorification. He is divinely inspired and this is divine inspiration."

The Fathers of the Church do not refer to infallibility in everyday matters and in guidance. They mainly use the word 'unerring'. 'Infallible' is used for dogmatic issues. 'Unerring' is used in relation to man's therapeutic treatment.

"The Fathers do not say 'infallible'. In patristic language they say 'unerring'. Someone becomes 'unerring'. 'Unerring' means that he is not led astray. Led astray by what? He is not led astray by the devil. That is to say, they have constant remembrance of God within them, now and again also the experience of glorification, and they have the unerring guidance of the Holy Spirit, Who prays unceasingly within their hearts. Having the Holy Spirit in this way, they have the unerring guidance of the Holy Spirit on matters that concern man's therapeutic treatment.

So, from the therapeutic point of view, this guide is unerring. He is not, however, infallible in the sense that he cannot make mistakes, because he makes mistakes. Only on issues of spiritual guidance does he not make mistakes, because he guides his spiritual children

unerringly to illumination and glorification, to curative treatment and perfection.

From the Orthodox viewpoint, when we speak about the infallibility of the Church we are only referring to teaching on the Holy Trinity, God, divine grace, the diagnosis of the infirmities of the human personality, the cure of the human personality, the perfection of the human personality, hell and paradise, the incarnation, the saints, the Theotokos and everything connected with the experience of glorification. On other issues there is no infallibility, nor can there be, because there we are in the domain of the positive sciences."

What has been said above demonstrates the methodology of the Fathers, how they interpreted Holy Scripture and finally how they theologised. Everything started from their own experience of the Holy Spirit. As we mentioned earlier, the methodology of the Fathers was not philosophical and did not rely on reason and speculation. The philosophical methodology, which is based on reasoning, probability and imagination, is the method used by heretics, who also used ancient Greek philosophy and its methodology.

It is clear that the holy Fathers of the Church did not philosophise. They used neither the views of the philosophers nor their methodology. This means that the Fathers did not accept metaphysics. The Fathers were the same as the Prophets and the Apostles.

"What is a Father of the Church? What are the Fathers of the Church? What is a Prophet? What is an Apostle? What is a saint? In the patristic tradition all the saints are Fathers, all the saints follow the neptic tradition, all the saints have reached particular states, and so on.

In theology today, however, various adjustments have been made in this respect. They say, 'Ah! The great Fathers of the Church are the Fathers who used philosophy. St Athanasios the Great.' Well, poor St Athanasios the Great had not the slightest idea about philosophy. He knew Holy Scripture and empirical theology, but absolutely nothing about philosophy. St Athanasios the Great was not interested in the subject. Every time he refers to philosophers he simply mocks them."

The Fathers were not philosophers. Some of them had studied and knew the principles of Greek philosophy, but they had not accepted them, and they did not use philosophy in their theology.

> "The great Fathers of the Church were not Greek philosophers. They had no connection with Greek philosophers. The great Cappadocians and Chrysostom were not philosophers. They were people occupied in curing the human personality. Their main concern was bringing their spiritual children from purification to illumination, and from illumination to glorification. This was their concern. The whole of Orthodox theology had this aim. It had no other purpose."

No one who reads the writings of the Fathers can turn them into philosophers, however hard he tries.

> "If someone takes the Cambridge volume, looks up 'Intellectual History of the Byzantine Empire' and searches for 'Byzantine philosophy', he will find very sparse references, almost nothing, because philosophers in Byzantium were practically non-existent. Someone has to turn the Fathers of the Church into philosophers in order to write a history of Byzantine philosophy. But the Fathers of the Church cannot be turned into philosophers. That is the problem.
>
> Take any Father of the Church and try to change him into a philosopher. They have tried it. The one who could be described to some extent as a philosopher is, we might say, Gregory of Nyssa. But anyone who knows him well enough, understands that he does not differ at all from Gregory the Theologian. Try and make out that Gregory the Theologian is a philosopher. It cannot be done. Or make Athanasios a philosopher. Out of the question. Some choose Basil. But he turns out to be neither a philosopher nor what certain people wish he were."

The Fathers made a clear distinction in their works between theology and philosophy, since they knew from experience that theology is a therapeutic science and not imagination and speculation.

> "In what is called Byzantium they knew the patristic tradition very well. The intellectual world was very much alive, full of life.

They had an excellent knowledge of the ancients, they were very familiar with the philosophers and they also knew very well how to distinguish between philosophy, which most people did not accept, and theology.

As they did not identify theology with philosophy and were very well aware that theology is a therapeutic science, they knew what the aim of theology is, what illumination is, what glorification is, and all such things. They learnt these things just in discussion, without reading anything. They could simply talk to monks, with this one or the other, and come to some sort of perception of these matters. The whole atmosphere was imbued with these perceptions..."

"There is no history of Byzantine philosophy because, I maintain, there is no Byzantine philosophy. Only positive sciences exist for us. Our forefathers were very practical: they did not philosophise. And when they theologised, they spoke about God from experience. Their whole orientation was empirical. The continuous re-evaluation of the Fathers as Platonists etc, is a fiction invented by our modern Greek theologians, who are ready to turn the Fathers of the Church into philosophers."

Even apophatic theology is completed unconnected with philosophical speculation.

"What needs emphasising is that the apophatic tradition of ascribing names to God, from the patristic point of view, has absolutely no connection with philosophical speculation or any other kind of conjecture. No connection at all. Everything the Fathers say has a very clear basis; it all starts from the experience of glorification, from observation. Its purpose is to create again in each one the same experience of glorification. We start with glorification and we come back again to glorification."

We see in the patristic texts that, although the Fathers had studied philosophy, they rejected it in the realm of theology, precisely because philosophy relies on speculation, whereas Orthodox theology relies on experience.

"The Fathers of the Church constantly hurled hostile remarks at Greek philosophy, for no other reason than that the basis of

philosophy in that era was the philosophers' speculation, so there was no way to check whether or not what the philosophers said was correct.

That is why the history of philosophy is very important and, above all, the speculation of the ancient Greeks is of great significance, because they continuously suggested hypotheses. Only in very few cases, however, were they able, together with these hypotheses, to suggest a way of checking them, so that they could be put through tests and upgraded from hypotheses to axioms."

The Fathers of the Church not only did not philosophise, they also rejected metaphysics. When we say 'metaphysics', we mean what is called ontology, the belief that there is a blissful Being that has within it ideas, on the basis of which the world was made; that there is an immutable world; and that man's soul previously lived in the uncreated world of ideas, to which it longs to return. Metaphysics accepts an unchanging world and that man is able to conceive God rationally.

"For this reason the Fathers of the Church do not accept metaphysics, because metaphysics is human reflection on the subject of 'the immutable'. By means of concepts and words, man thinks about and expresses 'the immutable'. This is the foundation of metaphysics. In patristic theology, however, we have the famous saying of Gregory the Theologian, the compass for every Orthodox theologian, which tells us, 'It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.' We can neither describe God in words nor understand Him."

The Fathers of the Church did not accept philosophy, not even the philosophical perceptions of Plato and Aristotle, as a method of investigating God. Even during the period of Turkish domination, people knew very well that there is no metaphysical orientation in theological matters.

"I had touched on the subject of metaphysics and the fact that the Fathers of the Church, along with the whole monastic world, in the years of Turkish domination did not accept any sort of philosophical orientation, to put it that way, in theological matters. From the very beginning the Fathers of the Church rejected what is called

metaphysics in the West, in other words, that it is possible for the human nous (reason) to conceive God."

"The Fathers of the Church demolished philosophy, always by means of arguments. They did not, however, use arguments from the positive sciences. Their own arguments were theological. Today we have scientific arguments. Whether philosophy is demolished by the positive sciences or by Orthodox theology, the result is the same. Philosophy is demolished."

"We see the Fathers opposing Aristotle, Plato and all the philosophers of their era. This is also significant."

"The teaching of Plato was never accepted by the patristic tradition. This was because the Fathers of the Church never accepted that the soul was immortal by nature. According to the Fathers of the Church, the soul is mortal by nature, not immortal by nature, because for the Fathers of the Church only God is immortal by nature."

We encounter the same view among the monks who lived within the patristic tradition and understood the teaching of the Fathers.

"The monks did not want to hear anything about ancient Greek philosophers. When they heard Plato or Aristotle mentioned, they repeated what the Fathers said about Plato and Aristotle."

The Fathers were against metaphysics, but also against the epistemology on which metaphysics depended. We see this in both St Gregory of Nyssa and St Dionysios the Areopagite, whom some people regard as Fathers who used philosophy.

"Of course there are no Fathers of the Church who support the need to philosophise. In general, though, the Fathers of the Church are completely against both metaphysics and epistemology based on metaphysics. This is completely obvious in both Gregory of Nyssa and the alleged Platonist, Dionysios the Areopagite. From start to finish he is against all the categories of Platonic philosophy."

In general, "the Fathers reject the philosophical orientation in theology". Patristic teaching is connected with the positive sciences, which

are linked with experience. It relates more closely to medical science, since it cures man's ailing personality.

> "Medical science is more closely akin to patristic theology than are all the philosophies in the world. Because essentially patristic theology has nothing at all to do with philosophy."

Since the creation of the modern Greek state, however, the view has been formulated that the Fathers who knew philosophy upgraded the simple faith to philosophy, and the feast of the Three Hierarchs is celebrated in this atmosphere.

> "If you read any article from the time that the Greek state was founded until today, you will see how many of them write about the Fathers as though they were great philosophers. They could not tolerate staying with the simple faith of their mothers and grandparents, who had not gone to university but were very good people, just as Augustine had described: 'They know the path but they do not know where they are going.' They were simply good people.
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> Now the great Fathers arrive, who had a very sound philosophical education. They take the simple faith of Holy Scripture and they raise it to the level of a sophisticated philosophical faith, so that we can attract intellectuals to the Church as well. Because the Church drew uneducated people initially, and now we are trying to draw the intellectuals. This tendency is very prevalent and one reason for its creation was a sort of patriotism that developed in Greece around our classical forebears, that they were great philosophers and we ought to return to them, to become philosophers as they were.
>
> Thus the great Fathers of the Church ended up becoming philosophers. How many times do we hear on the Feast of the Three Hierarchs about the philosophical skill of Gregory, Basil and Chrysostom? A lot of it is slogans. We have Gregory the Theologian, who is a catapult against Greek philosophy. Chrysostom rails against Greek philosophy. And they found a few things Basil says about educating young people, whereas there are whole passages by Basil in which he states the same views on Greek philosophy. This is the basic issue."

This attitude towards the patristic tradition led to the view that faith

ought to be changed into knowledge with the help of philosophy. This was also linked with the idea of nationalism.

Nevertheless, the Fathers were purely empirical. They relied on the experience of the Holy Spirit, which they had acquired living within the Church, the risen and glorified Body of Christ. Their experience, therefore, was not individualistic but personal.

> "The Fathers only accepted empirical phenomena. So illumination is a purely empirical state. The same applies to glorification: it is a purely empirical state. The whole theology of the Church is based on these empirical states. Consequently it has no place at all within the framework of philosophy."

The Fathers did not philosophise. They interpreted Holy Scripture on the basis of their personal experience, without speculating about it. The holy Fathers used Holy Scripture because it was the writings of divinely inspired men, but they interpreted it on the basis of their own personal experience.

> "When the Fathers theologise, they do not speak about God only from Holy Scripture, but from their own experience."

The Holy Fathers also took terms that people used in that era, but they gave them another meaning, in accordance with the revelation they had received.

> "The term 'coessential' (*homoousios*) was used by the heretics. Paul of Samosata used 'coessential' first, in a heretical way. The Church took a heretical term from Paul of Samosata and it became the criterion for Orthodoxy. The Fathers did not take the meaning that Paul of Samosata had given this term and use it. They took the term, gave this term another meaning and used it. We see this clearly in the patristic tradition."

They interpreted Holy Scripture in this perspective. Their interpretation was not philological and personal, but empirical and inspired by the Holy Spirit. They had the same life as the Prophets and the Apostles, so they understood their words.

> "When the Fathers of the Church read the Old Testament, they read it as if already in the Old Testament there was purification, illumination, constant remembrance of God and noetic prayer, and

they interpret the Psalms accordingly. The Psalms are interpreted as sacred songs expressing this experience of purification, illumination and glorification."

The starting point for the Fathers' interpretation is their own experience. It is significant that someone can discern this even today, provided that he possesses this spiritual experience and reads patristic texts. This happens because the Church is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, and the current of Orthodox Tradition flows within it.

It is well known that the Orthodox faith was defined first in Local Councils, but later also in Ecumenical Councils in dogmas and sacred canons, by the Fathers, who convened these Councils in order to deal with heretics.

The Ecumenical Council is infallible, but this has to be interpreted in an Orthodox way.

"Today we have the teaching about the infallibility of the Ecumenical Councils. This teaching on the infallibility of the Ecumenical Councils, as it is described nowadays, is as though there were an institution called 'Ecumenical Council', which has infallibility in the Church. In all the years that I have been reading the Fathers, I have never found that idea anywhere. Such a perception of the Ecumenical Council does not exist in the Fathers.

The Ecumenical Council is definitely infallible, but it is not an infallible institution and it is not a permanent institution. The Church existed for three hundred and twenty five years before the First Ecumenical Council and lived without an Ecumenical Council; and from the Ninth Ecumenical Council in 1341 until today there has been no Ecumenical Council."

The divine inspiration of the Ecumenical Councils is connected with the presence at them of Fathers who were divinely inspired. The Council is not divinely inspired as an institution, but because glorified people take part in it.

"What makes an Ecumenical Council divinely inspired? Or, what makes a Local Council divinely inspired, and what is divine inspiration? When the Fathers of a Council, be it Local or Ecumenical, assemble to condemn a heresy, what constitutes the authority and the divine inspiration for this Council? For the bishop who takes

part in a Council, together with all the other bishops, whether we take them singly or as a group, when does divine inspiration begin and when does it cease?

I, for one, have never found anywhere the view that the Fathers of a Council are divinely inspired because they have come together in an Ecumenical Council, and so at that time they are divinely inspired. Whether there is a Local Council or an Ecumenical Council, the views are the same as far as the Fathers of the Church are concerned. The difference is the universal nature of the one and the local nature of the other, which is not a matter of the Churches but a matter of the way they were convened.

If we had one hundred and fifty bishops who were not divinely inspired before they went to the Council, would those who were not inspired before the Council become divinely inspired after the inaugural prayer of the Council? And would they cease to be divinely inspired after the end of the Council? What is happening here? Was the Apostle Paul divinely inspired before he picked up his pen to write the Epistle to the Romans, and did he cease to be divinely inspired when he wrote Amen at the end? When did his divine inspiration begin and when did it end? The same can be asked of all the books of Holy Scripture.

That is why last time I, for one, offered the view that divine inspiration in the Church is no different from the inspiration that scientists have."

The bishops, who attained to the vision of God, beheld God and were in communication with Him, thus became the Fathers, who are the basis of the Ecumenical Councils.

Those who are guided by their experience are divinely inspired. Naturally this experience is of two kinds: the experience of illumination and the experience of glorification. These empirical Fathers are the basis of the Ecumenical Councils.

The glorified bishops reached the state of union with God and divine vision and have sure knowledge of God. The Holy Spirit acts through them. The holy Fathers lived in various parts of the world, but through the Holy Spirit they had acquired experience of God, and when they gathered in Ecumenical Councils they also acquired a common terminology.

"Without there being any Pope of Rome among the Fathers to dictate what the dogmas were, all the Fathers together completely spontaneously always supported the same truth. These were people who were separated by vast geographical distances, which in those days were equivalent to the distance from us to the moon, because someone living in one part of the Empire was as far apart from someone else living in another part of the Empire as if they were living on two different planets. As they had the same experience, however, they reached common decisions."

There are, unfortunately, some people today who overlook the glorified Fathers and value the Councils more highly than the Fathers, whereas the opposite is the case. The Councils themselves call upon the teaching of the God-seeing Fathers.

"Orthodox people today do exactly the same. 'The Church says,' or 'Holy Scripture says,' or 'the Ecumenical Council says'. This is strange, because we learn from contemporary Orthodox Christians that the Ecumenical Council has great authority in the Church and they are doubtful about the authority of the Fathers of the Church. They put the Council above the Fathers of the Church.

When you read the record of the proceedings of the Councils, the Ecumenical Council invokes the Fathers of the Church. They say, 'The three hundred and eighteen Fathers said', 'The one hundred and fifty Fathers said', 'The six hundred Fathers said'. When we think of an Ecumenical Council, for us it is a Council of Fathers of the Church. It is an assembly of Fathers who teach these things..."

This sort of institutional view of the Church originates from the Franks and the teaching of blessed Augustine, who asserted that the Church is the authority for accepting dogmas, whereas for us the authority is the Fathers, and not "an abstract idea, which is an organised ecclesiastical authority".

c) The Patristic Period

It has become clear that the prophetic era is inseparably connected with the apostolic and patristic tradition, and this patristic tradition continues the apostolic era until our own time.

"One issue that needs a lot of clarification is the matter of the period of the patristic tradition. When does the patristic period begin and when does it end? For the Fathers of the Church themselves, the patristic tradition begins with Abraham. They speak of 'the Fathers of the Old Testament', 'the Fathers of our Fathers', and sometimes simply 'the Fathers' or even 'Forefathers,' and refer to those before the Law, under the Law and after the Law. It is very significant that there are Fathers before the Law, who are reconciled with God and friends of God, who have actually reached the experience of glorification before the Law. This is very important as it enables us to take a correct view of matters. Afterwards we have the Apostles; we have the incarnation, the period between the incarnation and Pentecost. Then we have what happens after Pentecost."

Thus the patristic tradition is continuous in the Church without interruption.

In the West the Frankish theologians developed the theory that the patristic tradition came to an end in the 8th century. During the period of conflicts between Franks and Romans, the Franks did not accept St John of Damascus as a Father, only later did they regard St John of Damascus as the last Father of the Church. So the patristic tradition ended with him.

"In the era of the dispute (between Franks and Romans) the Damascene was not regarded as a Father of the Church by the Franks. The Franks accepted the Damascene in the 12th century as a Father of the Church. Until then they did not accept him. That is why the theology of Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica* holds such an important place. Aquinas continuously calls upon Augustine most of all, certain other Fathers, and the Damascene.

St John of Damascus had finally been translated into Latin and they accepted him as a Father of the Church. According to the Franks, however, he is the last Father of the Church who wrote in Greek. Why is he the last Father of the Church? Because all the other Fathers of the Church opposed the Franks on the subject of the *filioque*. Is it possible for them to accept as Fathers of the Church those who rejected the *filioque*? That is how St John of Damascus became the last Father of the Church in the East.

In the West the last Father of the Church was either Isidore of Seville or Bernard of Clairvaux. But why does the patristic tradition end for the Franks in the West? The patristic tradition for the Franks is mainly the Roman theological tradition of patristic theology. Now we have the Frankish tradition and this theology is called scholastic theology. It is the Latin theological tradition as distinct from the Roman. Since the Franks regarded themselves as a better, nobler and cleverer people than the Romans, scholastic theology is also regarded as an improvement on patristic theology, and seen as superior to patristic theology.

Western theologians followed this line until the day before yesterday. When I was studying in a Papal school, this is what I was taught. There was patristic theology, then patristic theology gave way to scholastic theology. And the highest theology that has ever existed in the whole history of humankind is the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas.

Take the writings of Greek theologians after the Greek Revolution and you will see that they have been influenced by these Frankish ideas, which also reached Russia. Because when the Russians started writing they could not say that the Damascene was the last Father of the Church, and usually they ended with St Photius the Great as the last Father of the Church.

Now take the Greek writings and look up how many here in Greece say the same thing, that Photius is the last Father of the Church here in the East, and St Isidore of Seville in the West. This is the usual way of writing patristic theology and the history of dogmas. They tell us that we have no Fathers of the Church after St Photius the Great."

That they did not regard St John of Damascus as a Father of the Church is clear from their failure to accept the decisions of the Seventh Ecumenical Council concerning the holy icons. This is unacceptable from an Orthodox point of view, however, because the patristic tradition has never come to an end. For that reason, St Symeon the New Theologian, St Gregory Palamas and the 'Philokalic' Fathers in the period of Turkish domination, among others, have been declared to be Fathers.

"The Franks accepted the Seventh Ecumenical Council in the

12th century, and from then onwards John of Damascus was also reinstated as the last Father of the Church in the East and Bernard of Clairvaux as the last Father in the West, and this strange tradition continues. What is curious is the peculiar phenomenon of the parallelism between the Frankish tradition and the Russian tradition.

The Greek-speaking Orthodox within the Ottoman Empire never thought that the patristic tradition had ended, because for them the patristic tradition was Symeon the New Theologian, Nikitas Stithatos, Gregory Palamas, all the disciples of Gregory Palamas. For us the patristic tradition existed even in the period of Turkish domination. This tradition, that there was a tradition even after the fall of Constantinople, was destroyed by the University of Athens."

The Franks did not know any of the Roman Fathers of the Church. In order to develop their theology, they used certain views of blessed Augustine.

"The Franks knew no Fathers of the Church except Augustine. They also had Ambrose. That was another major problem, because it gives the impression that Augustine was Ambrose's pupil. If, however, you do a comparison with the teachings of Augustine on the theological method, Ambrose has nothing like that in his writings.

In his theological method, Ambrose closely follows the Cappadocian Fathers, whom he translates and copies, because he knows Greek perfectly and reads them as well. In fact Jerome makes the accusation against Ambrose that his book about the Holy Spirit is nothing more than a translation from St Basil the Great. He copies St Basil to the letter on issues concerning the Holy Trinity. Of course this is not blameworthy, but he simply mentions it. Later, on the subject of revelation in the Old Testament, Ambrose follows word for word the earlier Fathers who wrote in Latin, who agreed absolutely with the Fathers who wrote in Greek. There is no difference at all.

Augustine, under the influence of his Manichaean past, wrote completely new interpretations. His interpretations of the manifestations of God in the Old Testament bear no relation either to the earlier Latin-speaking Fathers of the Church, or to any of the Greek-speaking Fathers of the Church. He takes a completely original new

line on these issues, that is to say, concerning the revelation of the Holy Trinity in the Old Testament and so on."

The Frankish theory about the patristic tradition coming to an end with St John of Damascus or St Photius was also developed by Russian theology, which includes St Gregory Palamas in the patristic tradition and progresses to new opinions.

"The perception developed among the Franks, who had conquered the Western provinces, that patristic theology used to exist and their own theology had taken its place, exactly as we see among the Russians. There is no Russian Father of the Church or, at least, if they exist they do not call them Fathers of the Church.

So there is the perception among the Russians that patristic theology ended with John of Damascus or Photius the Great. Or there are some Russians who can 'hold on' until Gregory Palamas in patristic theology. Then patristic theology stops, essentially, and Russian theology takes over from patristic theology. This is the line the Russians take. It is a fact."

Tsarist Russia was much influenced by Frankish theology, particularly by scholastic theology and theological feudalism. This is why hesychasm – as represented by St Maximos of Vatopedi, called 'the Greek' – was condemned in Russia as anti-patristic.

The view of the Franks and the Russians that the patristic tradition came to an end in the 8th century led to the assertions that Frankish scholasticism and Russian theology surpassed the patristic tradition.

"The important thing for us to bear in mind is that the Russians were greatly influenced by the West from very early on. Because from the time when they officially condemned Maximos of Vatopedi, called 'the Greek', to imprisonment in the 16th century, they also condemned Nil Sorsky, who was leader of the Russian hesychasts.

The Russians had hesychastic monasticism. It seems that a movement started then for them to abandon this monasticism in exchange for a contemporary Western type. A non-Athonite kind of monasticism was introduced into Russia. This, obviously, was after Maximos of Vatopedi and Nil Sorsky had been condemned. Monasticism was condemned along with them.

In the Russian tradition, monks of the Holy Mountain are called 'Non-Possessors', whereas the others are called 'Possessors'. One side said that poverty was essential for the monk, as they used to say in earlier times; no one can be an ascetic without being free from possessions. The other side said that property was indispensable for monasticism and it was essential for them to have property. Then the curious tradition was introduced into Russia whereby the Russian monasteries not only had lands but also servants, like the monasteries of the Franks.

The Frankish Monasteries always had a Frank as an Abbot and most of the monks were not Franks. This monasticism with serfs was introduced into Russia. When the class of muzhiks developed in Russia, particularly with the reforms of Peter the Great, European feudalism came into Russia and these people were made subservient. The monasteries were feudal institutions.

When scholastic theology appeared, monasticism in Russia faded away. Afterwards, hesychasm returned in 1817 with the spiritual children of Paissy Velichkovsky. Thus the revival of hesychastic monasticism began, which had such a great influence on Dostoevsky. It is obvious. Later it also influenced the Slavophiles, but in a romantic way, not in essence. The Slavophile theologians are something different. We should turn our attention to them as well.

The Russians had the idea that patristic theology had finished. They were unable to accept the idea that, after the fall of Constantinople, the Romans could be the hesychasts of the patristic tradition. Because now, with the development of holy Russia, the Russians had become the heirs not only of the political rights of Romanity but also of the theological rights. So they ought to become the supreme heirs of the Orthodox Church. Thus they became susceptible to the Franks' theory about the patristic tradition coming to an end.

In the Frankish tradition, however, patristic theology ended in a theological and political manner, because, when the Franks added the *filioque* to the Creed, they immediately encountered the opposition of all the Roman theologians in the Empire, in both West and East. The Latin-speaking Romans as well as the Greek-speaking Romans objected to the introduction of the *filioque* into the Creed and

to the dogma of the *filioque*. This meant that, because the Fathers of the Church fought against the *filioque*, it was impossible for them to be regarded as Fathers of the Church by the Franks.

For this reason and in this way, because the Roman Fathers of the Church fought against the *filioque*, the Franks automatically terminated the patristic tradition with John of Damascus. Because John of Damascus was the last Father of the Church who did not do battle against the *filioque*, at least openly, although he clearly taught that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father.

For this reason Thomas Aquinas says that he was influenced by Theodoret of Cyrus on this issue. Thomas Aquinas admits that the Damascene is against the *filioque*. It was known to the Franks that John of Damascus was against the *filioque*. That is precisely why they did not have him as a Father of the Church from the beginning. John of Damascus became acceptable as a Father of the Church only in the 12th century, together with the Seventh Ecumenical Council. Officially, John of Damascus is in favour of icons and in favour of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, and definitely against the *filioque*. Afterwards, however, a compromise was reached between the vanquished Romans of Rome and the Franks, and the outcome of this compromise was the recognition of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and John of Damascus by the Franks, since the Romans of the West had already accepted the *filioque* under duress.

What is of interest to us is that, when the Russians and the Franks say that patristic theology comes to an end, they mean by this expression that it is succeeded by something better than what was there before. In the Frankish tradition, Frankish theology is better than patristic theology. It is not simply a continuation of the patristic tradition, but is superior to it. For that reason, the propaganda is that patristic theology ends and afterwards scholastic theology begins. Scholastic theology is superior to patristic theology. Here in Greece such a thing is unimaginable. The Russians, too, took a curious line. For them Byzantium forfeited patristic theology with the fall of the Empire..."

The Marxists encountered this scholastic and feudalistic theology of Tsarist Russia and made war on Christianity. This sort of theology

of Western origin is not Orthodox patristic theology, but a deviation from it.

> "The Marxists do not know the God of Orthodoxy. Russian Marxists know the God of Tsarist Russia, but He is the God of the Franks, the God of metaphysics and philosophy, not the God of the patristic tradition and hesychasm, of experience, glorification and illumination. This is not the God of Tsarist Russia. Because Tsarist Russia in the 16th century officially condemned hesychasm, when it imprisoned Maximos of the Holy Mountain, and he died in prison. This means that the Russian tradition took shape far away from the patristic tradition. The Russians have their own tradition.
>
> For that reason the Greeks have been deluded for so many years with the propaganda of Korais, thinking that they will imitate the Russians. In which era will they imitate the Russians? If you reckon that, when Korais wrote that the Orthodox Church of Greece should imitate Tsarist Russia, that country had feudalism and the Church was supporting feudalism in those years, the servitude of Russians, of the muzhiks..."

The modern Greek state accepted Korais' theories and hastily broke away from the Ecumenical Patriarch, with ecclesiastical and theological consequences.

> "This means that the Ministry of Education immediately adopted the line of Adamantios Korais. In this way the foundations of patristic theology were destroyed and replaced with westernised Russian theology and praxis. This is extremely important. Theology and praxis go together."

In recent times intense efforts have been made to alter the foundations of the patristic tradition.

> "In the modern Greek state, Orthodoxy had been completely uprooted, destroying its traditional inner continuity with the past. They had not the slightest clue about the patristic theological method. Not that they did not understand it; not a trace of comprehension had remained. Nothing, absolutely nothing, had remained. They did not even know any more what God was, nor did they know what illumination was, nor did they know what purification was, nor did they

know how the Fathers interpreted Holy Scripture...All they knew, in a superficial way, were a few things from the Fathers."

Fortunately in our own days we have understood this loss and are returning to the genuine hesychastic patristic tradition. To summarise, the Fathers are the successors of the Apostles and the Prophets, and the patristic tradition is inseparably linked with ecclesiastical life.

6. Saints

All those who to varying degrees share in the sanctifying and glorifying energies of God are called saints. The category of saints includes the Prophets, Apostles, Fathers and all the friends of Christ down through the centuries, all who share in the illuminating and glorifying energies of God, among whom are the Martyrs and the holy ascetics, clergy and laity, men and women, young and old. All these are called saints.

a) Who is a Saint?

Saints are not just good people, but those who are united with the unincarnate and incarnate Word, with Christ. Sanctity is the shared characteristic of all the Prophets, Apostles, Fathers, Martyrs and Ascetics. All are saints, because they have God's sanctifying energy and they are Fathers, because they beget spiritual children.

> "The distinction between saints and Fathers does not exist in the Fathers. For the Fathers of the Church the saints are Fathers and the Fathers are saints."

Saints is the name given to those who, through purification and illumination, reach glorification and share in the glorifying energies of God.

> "Are those who have arrived at glorification and become saints a reality or are they not a reality? That is the fundamental issue."

The meaning of sanctity is not humanistic or moralistic but theological. Saints are those who have been spiritually cured. Their hearts have been purified and they have reached illumination of the nous and glorification. They are the real – the active – members of the Body of Christ.

> "The current perception is that if someone is a good human

being, law-abiding and so on, then he is a good Christian and a prospective saint. In that case, all our grandmothers and grandfathers are prospective saints, according to the criteria of the moralists. Someone with a moralistic perception of sanctity might see things in this way.

In patristic theology, however, there is another perception. Anyone who has been cured is a saint. A saint in the patristic tradition simply means someone who is cured. It means someone who has gone through purification and reached illumination, and from illumination has gone on to glorification. He has been cured and, consequently, he is a saint.

For this reason, in the early Church they called one another saints, even before they died. Why were the Christians called saints – the saints of Thessaloniki, the saints of Corinth and so on – and why did they call living people saints? Why? Because the members of the Church in early times were in the state of illumination. They had noetic prayer at the very least, and as they had noetic prayer and were in the state of illumination, they were called saints."

In fallen human life the noetic faculty (energy) does not function or functions inadequately. When the noetic faculty is released from the rational faculty (energy) and activated, then the nous is illuminated and, by the action of God and his own collaboration, man reaches glorification. He is a saint. A saint, by God's action and his own co-operation, becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle Paul analyses this fact. He writes: *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God"* (Rom. 8:14). To be led by the Spirit means that they have received the Holy Spirit and acquired the gift of adoption as sons: *"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption"* (Rom. 8:15). The spirit of adoption is expressed by prayer of the heart: *"By whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'"* (Rom. 8:15). It is significant that *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"* (Rom. 8:16). Someone who does not have this Spirit does not have noetic prayer. He is not a son of God by grace and, consequently, he is not a real member of the Body of Christ: *"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His"* (Rom. 8:9).

These are the characteristic features of a saint.

"The Apostle Paul says that we do not speak with human wisdom, but with the power of the Holy Spirit. What does this mean and why is the power of the Holy Spirit opposed to the wisdom of this world? It is the power of the energy of the Holy Spirit within man.

Everyone who sees a saint understands that he is a temple of the Holy Spirit. He is not convinced about him being a temple of the Holy Spirit by philosophical arguments or by the theology of this one or another. He sees that he is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because he often even hears Him taking the part of the priest within him.

What does the witness of the Spirit says to man's spirit? *'That we are children of God.'* This testimony that the Apostle Paul speaks about, saying that *'The Spirit cries out Abba, Father in our hearts'*, this Spirit, Who cries out within our hearts – is St Paul describing a reality or a figment of the imagination?

St Paul speaks in his Epistles about this power of the Holy Spirit in man's heart. What is this power? Anyone who looks carefully at what St Paul writes sees that he is speaking about real prayer within the heart of man."

The difference between deranged people and saints lies in how their noetic faculty functions. If someone's noetic faculty is identified with the rational faculty and the latter deviates from its normal function, this is insanity. If the noetic faculty is motivated by the Holy Spirit according to God, then the man is a saint.

"The difference between madness and sanctity is that in the first case the noetic faculty is unfettered, unrestrained and so on, and is influenced by someone's personality in such a way that he becomes insane, because he does not function normally, like an ordinary human being."

When someone participates in the illuminating and glorifying energies of God, he experiences divine grace in his entire being: in his soul through noetic prayer, and in his body by overcoming the fear of death. Thus he is led to martyrdom.

"The lives of the New Martyrs are a proof that the state of il-

lumination, as it existed in the early Church in the years of persecution, continued to exist as the heart of Orthodoxy in the years of Turkish domination. This power of the faithful to undergo martyrdom is what saved Orthodoxy in the years of Turkish domination, so that not all the Romans [Greeks] became Muslims. Most Romans became Muslims. Why did the small minority who remained not become Muslims? They had great confidence in the saints of the Church, that they were bearers of divine grace and that divine power really existed within them. And what is divine power? It is this power to be able to undergo martyrdom and physical tortures so as not to deny Christ. This was the proof of the true faith."

The saints, therefore, are not just good people but those who are glorified. There are some who pretend to be saints, but in reality they are hypocrites who lead people astray. Even heretics are good people and may lead moral lives, but because they do not have Orthodox theology and the ascetic teaching of the Church, they go no further than an ethical way of life. They do not share in the glorified energy of God and are unable to cure others.

"In a conference, someone stood up and said that Arius was a holy man. Because he did not know what sanctity was. Other people here were present and they heard him with their own ears. Arius was a saint! What did he mean? He meant that Arius was a good man. There is no doubt at all that he was a good man; Arius was a very good man."

A good man, however, is not the same as a saint. The saints participate in the glorifying energies of God, and this is obvious, because they are able to help people, work miracles and cure them. Fake doctors may be good people, but they are unable to cure.

"You go to a charlatan and he says 'Yes, so we shall do this and we shall do that, some liniments ...You have this, that, and the other...' and he gathers up the thousand-drachma notes month after month. In the end the patient is forced to go to another doctor. Then he realises that the first one was a charlatan."

The aim of the Church is to sanctify its members, but simultaneously to use the appropriate means to achieve this aim. It has been

emphasised repeatedly that sanctity is experienced through the action of God and man's co-operation. God acts and man collaborates.

> "Here we have to mention man's freedom. I always remember that my mother used to say to me, 'Son,' she said, in Cappadocian, 'Son, you can't force someone to be a saint.' Of course a human being cannot become a saint by force. Everyone has to choose the path of therapeutic asceticism."

Therapeutic asceticism is inseparably linked with the sacramental life of the Church. It consists of purification, illumination and glorification, which we encounter in all the patristic teaching of the Church. Therapeutic asceticism is also integrally associated with the Church's Sacraments.

It should be pointed out here that there is a distinction between the noetic and rational faculties (energies). The noetic faculty must be activated by prayer, whereupon the nous is illuminated. In the first phase the nous, but not the rational faculty, must be emptied of all thoughts (*logismoi*). This is not a matter of being illiterate, but a special ascetic and ecclesiastical method.

> "The Fathers never meant that by being illiterate someone could achieve sanctity, but by emptying the nous of thoughts. That is what they meant, not by mental ignorance."

b) The Empirical Power of Faith

All this shows the great importance of the saints of the Church, who are the true members of the Risen Body of Christ and the real members of the Church. The saints demonstrate that the Orthodox Church and Orthodox theology have results. The Feast of All Saints is of very great significance and importance. When a Church leads people to sanctity, it is noted for its success. Otherwise it is a failure. A theology that does not produce saints is not Orthodox.

> "The criterion for Orthodoxy is success. What is meant by success? Success is for someone to progress from purification to illumination and eventually to reach glorification, either in this life or the next. So correct theology is judged by the success of this theology,

and the correct application of this therapeutic theology is judged by the extent to which the bishop, and the clergy in general, are successful in their work. So it could be said that the basic criterion of Orthodoxy is the Sunday of All Saints."

The same can be seen in the era of the Martyrs, but also of the New Martyrs. When a Martyr during the ancient persecutions, or a New Martyr in the period of Turkish domination, endured the tortures and did not deny Christ, this was proof that his faith was true. This was the best sermon.

"In those days they did not have moralistic sermons by educated theologians, who say fine things to impress people with their eloquence. Monks in that era were not interested in that sort of catechism and teaching. They were interested in the power of this faith and the empirical testimony of this faith, which makes a man believe. That is why we see that everyone in those days had prayer ropes."

We rely on the experience of the saints, as they acquired knowledge of God.

"The Prophets and the Apostles and the saints of the Church are our own authority concerning God. We have faith in God through these people. We cannot have direct experience regarding God, unless we have reached the stage of illumination and union or glorification in our spiritual life."

The great importance of the saints also lies in their prayer for us. Since they are glorified, they have boldness before God and intercede for us. We invoke their prayers, because we know that they are friends of God and have great boldness towards Him.

We see this in Abraham, who disputed with God, asking Him not to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as in Moses, who argued with God for the sake of the people.

Part 4

The Living Monuments of Revelation

The Living Monuments of Revelation

The God-seers, who are rightly described as the bearers of revelation, record the experience of revelation in writing, when it is necessary to do so. These writings can be called the living monuments of revelation. In the same way as artists express their inspiration in the works of art that they create – statues, paintings, poetry and so on – so the God-seers record this experience of revelation in texts.

These living monuments of revelation are Holy Scripture, which consists of the Old and New Testaments, and Holy Tradition, which is the writings of the holy Fathers and the whole Tradition of the Church. It is generally accepted that there are two sources of the faith: Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition. According to Orthodox teaching, however, the source of faith is the revelation of God, which is expressed through the Tradition and Holy Scripture.

Before discussing Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, the relationship between ineffable-uncreated words and created words and concepts should be examined.

1. Ineffable-Uncreated Words and Created Words and Concepts

One of the basic points of Orthodox theology is the relationship between ineffable words, on the one hand, and created words and concepts, on the other. The revelation of God is an experience of ineffable words and the revelation is recorded or conveyed with created words, concepts and images.

When someone does not understand this basic theological teaching he confuses matters and ends up either denying the theoria (vision) of the glory of God and deifying Holy Scripture, or else denying Holy Scripture and overstressing abstract psychological experience, with many consequences for the spiritual life.

Some interesting views on this matter will be highlighted.

a) Distinction between Ineffable Words and Created Words and Concepts

The basic scriptural passage which defines the difference between ineffable words and created words and concepts is the revelational excerpt from the Apostle Paul on this subject: *"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago - whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows - such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man - whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows - how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter"* (2 Cor. 12:2-4).

The Apostle Paul attained to the experience of revelation and heard ineffable words, which it is impossible for a human being to use or speak. In his epistles, however, the Apostle conveyed his experience of uncreated grace in created words and concepts.

Examples from science can be used to interpret this situation. Through observation and experimentation every scientist arrives at a theory and subsequently he records this theory in words and technical terms. In order for this experience to be understood, however, the scientist's own explanation is essential.

> "Every science has its practice as well as its theory. The theory is a classification from the conceptual point of view of the function of the science, and is expressed in concepts and words. The concepts are expressed in words, which are recorded in monographs, books, drawings and calculations, so that they can serve the needs of others as well.
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> Usually, in order for someone to be able to use these books on a particular science, he has to have instructors. I think it is impossible for someone to become a doctor just by reading books on medicine and surgery. He must join a team of doctors, surgeons and so on, in order to acquire the theory of the science, but also the practice of the science. The same happens in all the sciences.
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> So a book cannot be the conveyor of science. The book is used sometimes to provide particular 'reminders', in order to remind the scientist of the main points of a science and its practice. This connection between scientist, book, live teaching and pupil also exists in the patristic perception of Holy Scripture."

In the positive sciences, where experiments are performed by scientists located all over the world, everyone's experience is the same. Every scientist who reads about the experiments of other researchers is able to verify and confirm them.

> "When we engage in mathematics or chemistry or biology, the concepts and words that we use correspond to a certain reality. So if I am a biologist and someone has described something to me in a scientific journal, on the basis of the article that I read, I can repeat in my own laboratory what he saw. I can repeat his experiment and discover again what he discovered.
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> Thousands of biologists do this, so when they do these experiments and acquire knowledge, it is not like the situation among theologians, where each one says whatever comes into his head,

including fantasies, and they do imaginary analyses and so on; it is not a gamble.

If serious people engaged in the positive sciences in the same way as theologians engage in theology, we would not have any positive sciences."

What happens in the positive sciences happens in Orthodox theology, the difference being that the ineffable words are uncreated, whereas the words that convey the experience are created words and concepts. Discernment between ineffable-uncreated words and created words and concepts is significant for Orthodox theology. It is achieved by the energy of the Holy Spirit.

"When someone understands this distinction between ineffable words and words and concepts that are in the category of created things, he knows that the latter can never be merged or confused with ineffable words. These ineffable words are uncreated.

When someone understands that uncreated words (ineffable words) are in no way similar to the created words and concepts that we use in Holy Scripture, patristic theology and so on, it also becomes comprehensible to him that even the distinction between essence and energy in God, which is made with words, is not the result of a revelation."

b) The Revelation of God through Ineffable Words

When someone who is glorified attains to revelational experience, he sees the uncreated Light. He is within the uncreated Light and 'there' no created words and concepts exist, no categories of human thought that are expressed and formulated through rational processes. The experience of glorification goes beyond all words and concepts. Subsequently, however, the experience of glorification creates divinely inspired concepts.

"In the experience of glorification God goes beyond concepts and in this experience meaning is surmounted. There are no concepts in this experience, but the outcome of this experience is the divinely inspired concepts which make up the Old and New Testaments.

Revelation goes beyond every concept and meaning, and is above words and understanding, because there is no similarity at all between God and the creation. Reason participates in the experience of revelation, but the actual glory of God transcends reason, which was created to understand created, not uncreated, things...

This experience, however, creates a divinely inspired state within man, as he has reached the vision of God and the concepts that he has acquired from this experience are divinely inspired, even though the experience is beyond any concept."

In the course of glorification and the vision of Christ's glory, words and concepts about Christ are not needed. Noetic prayer itself ceases.

When someone is at a lower stage of the spiritual life, words and concepts are needed for guidance. But when what is perfect - glorification - comes, created words, concepts and images are unnecessary.

"Since this experience transcends words and concepts, Christ says *'You cannot bear...'* (John 16:12). That is to say, until now I have taught you with words that have meanings. So you have a conceptual knowledge concerning the mysteries of the glory and rule (*vasileia*) of God. This conceptual knowledge was conveyed in words, words accompanied by illumination of the nous, so they are comprehensible to human reason because of the illumination of the nous. In this case someone sees why these things are true...

When, however, someone is at the stage of illumination he cannot go any further. What lies beyond cannot be taught with words and concepts. So he who has reached this stage cannot 'bear' what lies beyond, because what lies beyond, which is the experience of glorification itself, transcends words and concepts.

These things cannot be taught with words and concepts, because the experience is no longer words and concepts. Words and concepts are created. Glorification, however, is the state in which the human being, according to grace of course, becomes uncreated, that is to say, god according to grace. Only in this state can he bear glorification itself."

Although this is Orthodox teaching, in the Papal tradition the revelation of God is identified with created words and concepts.

"In the Papal tradition, which followed Augustine, the revelation is a revelation of concepts, and not only of concepts, but also of the words that accompany concepts.

Once someone identifies the revelation with the revelation of concepts and, going even further, with the spoken words that express concepts, we then have inspiration of Holy Scripture 'to the letter'. This means that God dictated these texts and concepts to the authors of Holy Scripture. If you pursue this line, the author of Holy Scripture is essentially not Moses, Elijah, Solomon and the rest, but God Himself. He is the real author of Holy Scripture."

The outcome of this was that in the West the revelation of God was identified with Holy Scripture.

"Since the revelation is identified in the West with Holy Scripture, this means that God reveals words and concepts to humankind. So essentially the revelation is words and concepts, which means that the essence of theology is for someone to study concepts and terminology concerning God. There is no other revelation beyond concepts and words. So in this world we are left with the words of Holy Scripture and nothing more.

Western theology in the Middle Ages was led in this direction, and Holy Scripture was identified in this way with the revelation. So the revelation is the words of Holy Scripture."

The Orthodox tradition, however, as mentioned already, stresses the truth that "words and concepts are about God" and "about the revelation". They are not God Himself or the revelation itself.

"The Fathers of the Church refuse to identify God with the words and concepts of human thought."

c) Conveying Ineffable-Uncreated Words by means of Created Words and Concepts

The *theoumenoi*, those who participate in glorification, convey this experience to the people in order to lead them to the experience of glorification. The created words and concepts that they use are not identical to the ineffable-uncreated words of the experience of glorifi-

cation. Even in illumination and noetic prayer there are created words and concepts.

> "The Fathers always used Gregory the Theologian as a classic example, Gregory the Theologian's theological words, which make it clear that God goes beyond all words and concepts. I mean his statement that 'It is impossible to express God and even more impossible to conceive Him.' He does not accept that it is possible for man to express God, and understanding God it is even less possible. 'Express' and 'conceive' refer to what are called words and concepts. Thus we have words, and we have concepts conveyed by the words. Each word conveys one, two, three, fifteen concepts. There are expressions about God and concepts about God, and God goes beyond both words and concepts."

We see this in Holy Scripture.

> "Do we have anything else in Holy Scripture apart from words and concepts? Is there anything else in Holy Scripture? There is nothing else. It is all words and concepts. There is nothing that is not in a word, unless someone sees the odd comma or hyphen between the words, everything else in Holy Scripture is words. These words convey concepts. We have concepts and words, but we cannot attribute either words or concepts to God, because God transcends words and concepts."

The holy Fathers have the same experience as the Prophets and Apostles, so in their writings they use created words and concepts which the Prophets and Apostles also used to enable them to convey the experience of glorification. However, because in their era heretics appeared who used philosophical terminology, the Fathers retained the same concepts and subsequently added to, or altered, the created words. From the point of view of level of knowledge, there is no difference between the words and concepts of the Apostles and those of the Fathers. The Fathers, without changing the concepts, simply added new words because of the heretical beliefs which were appearing.

> "Now I would like to raise the following point: as there is nothing higher than the experience of glorification, and as the experience of glorification transcends words and concepts, and the words and

concepts of Holy Scripture and the Fathers and the Councils have the same aim, is it ever possible for someone to say, from the epistemological point of view, that the words of the Fathers are higher or lower than Holy Scripture? I am raising the issue of criterion.

From the point of view of the criterion of truth, Holy Scripture is an absolute criterion. There cannot be anything in the patristic tradition that disagrees with Holy Scripture. From the point of view of criteria, Holy Scripture is an absolute criterion.

From the point of view of level of knowledge can Holy Scripture differ from the words and concepts of the Fathers and Councils? No. Because what are the words of the Fathers? They are the words and concepts of Holy Scripture. When the Fathers teach, they teach Holy Scripture itself. They use the same words to render the same concepts.

The Fathers, however, add words, particular words, to the words and concepts of the Old Testament and the New Testament. But they do not add any concept that does not exist in Holy Scripture. They add words but they do not add concepts. The concepts are the same. They add words, they change words. The Fathers always inherit words and concepts from the past.

They have the experience that their predecessors had. As they have the same experience, they also use the same words and concepts. Then, depending on circumstances, when new heresies and new needs arise, they add words to the existing words, in order to express the same concepts. They do not add new concepts. They use new words for the sake of clarity against specific heresies. The Holy Spirit illumines the Fathers depending on the circumstances, as they have the experience of illumination, and in certain cases also of glorification. They are illumined and always find new words to render the same concepts. The concepts do not change, the words change."

Created words and concepts that are inspired by God lead to salvation and are not the same as the methodology of philosophy. This is where the difference between the Fathers and heretics lies.

The Arians said that the Word Who appeared to the Prophets was created. The Fathers objected, from their experience, that the Word is

uncreated and therefore has the same essence as the Father. So they used the term 'coessential' (*homoousios*).

The term 'coessential' is the word that helps us to understand the subject rationally, but it does not abolish the concept. Its aim is to lead us to glorification. What is uncreated can never be identified with the concept, because that would be idolatry.

> "For this reason the Fathers say that anyone who identifies concepts, texts or created meanings with uncreated things is an idolater. It is idolatry to identify God with some idea that we have about God within ourselves. We think that our idea about God is God. When we identify our idea with God, idolatry begins. This is an idol."

The holy Fathers believed that there was no similarity between uncreated and created things, and consequently there was no similarity between ineffable-uncreated words and created words and concepts. This is why they did not accept metaphysics. Even when God is described, He is indescribable.

Only someone who is in the state of purification and illumination perceives the meaning of created words. By contrast, "The concepts and words used for God by someone who is not in the state of purification and illumination are clearly idolatrous and do not correspond to reality."

The aim of created words, concepts and images in Holy Scripture, as well as in patristic and conciliar texts, is to cure man by means of purification and illumination and to lead him to *theosis*, to the experience of glorification.

> "The words of Holy Scripture, the texts and concepts used in Holy Scripture, are not aimed at conveying concepts and words identical to the reality called God. The aim of the concepts and words of Holy Scripture is to lead man to purification, illumination and glorification, as the ascetic Fathers, in particular, teach, in order that he may acquire knowledge, prophecy. As the Apostle Paul says, then everything is abolished and the only thing that remains is love, which is freedom."

When man reaches glorification, the words about uncreated things are abolished, but not the concepts of created things and the human nature of Christ.

"The expressions, concepts and words about God have one single aim: to cure man, which is achieved when he progresses from illumination to glorification.

The strange thing about the experience of glorification is that in the experience of glorification, all concepts – not all concepts, but all concepts about God – come to an end, when someone faces the reality of what is uncreated, uncreated reality. Concepts of created things are not done away with, of course, nor concepts of Christ's human nature. The concepts that come to an end are those concerning uncreated things."

Heretics, however, never understood this fundamental Orthodox principle. They used created words and concepts in a different way and for a different purpose. They used them to philosophise about them.

"The heretics attempted to use created words to produce philosophical concepts, whereas the created words of Holy Scripture and the Tradition are not intended to convey philosophical concepts about God, so that man can acquire knowledge of God by means of reason. No, that is not the aim.

Heretics attempt to remove the distinction between glorification and illumination, so concepts are used in order to identify understanding with glorification. They believe that through reflection they have arrived at the pinnacle of knowledge about God, so they know better than those who have reached glorification."

This perception is the source of speculation in theology, and it leads in the end to scholasticism.

d) From Created Words to Ineffable Words

Holy Scripture, the dogmas of the Church and the patristic texts are full of created words and concepts, for the purpose of leading man to glorification.

The Christian, under the guidance of Holy Scripture, the dogmas and the patristic tradition, passes through the stage of purification and subsequently ascends to the stage of illumination, which is the stage of noetic prayer in the heart. At this stage created words and concepts

still exist and prayer is prayed with them. When, however, the Christian reaches glorification, created words and concepts are abolished.

> "In the experience of enlightenment or illumination there are certainly concepts and words. So dogma is also a guide at this stage. However, when someone arrives at glorification, words and concepts cease, and for this reason dogma too ceases. This means that dogma for Orthodox theology has a temporary, not a permanent, character."

The Holy Spirit Himself prays within us with created words and concepts. In glorification, however, even these come to an end.

> "Concepts are used in the experience of illumination, because man's illumination actually consists of words and concepts. So the aim of theology is to be abolished. Theology itself is abolished, because theology is the whole system of concepts and words that we use about God. So theology cannot have a philosophical aim. We cannot be occupied with God as though God were an object of philosophical investigation. This is ruled out in the Orthodox tradition. For this reason the Fathers reject the philosophical approach to theology."

Through noetic prayer someone knows God in part, but real knowledge is acquired in divine vision, in uncreated words, because God goes beyond words and concepts.

> "Holy Scripture is full of words and concepts. Prayer consists of spoken words and concepts. But when someone reaches glorification, these sayings and concepts about God are abolished. Why? Because God transcends all words and concepts. There is no saying or concept that can express God, or give someone an understanding of God, because God goes beyond all words and concepts. So man can never know God with his reason. Man can know God through illumination, only as a gift of the Holy Spirit, because he is in the state of illumination."

At the stages of purification and illumination, the words and concepts of Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church are necessary. They are, however, superseded in glorification.

"Created words are used in the first stages of perfection, but they are not absolute, in the sense that created words are used so that someone can be cured by means of these created words, under the guidance of a spiritual father, by Holy Scripture, by the writings of the Fathers of the Church and by the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils. Once he reaches the stage of glorification, however, this experience of glorification goes beyond words and concepts, because he arrives at ineffable words.

As he has arrived at ineffable words, this means that he has risen above Holy Scripture in what he knows about God. This does not mean that he has higher knowledge than Holy Scripture. It means that he has the same experience as the Prophets and Apostles and saints of the Church. From the point of view of glorification, he has the same experience. He may not have reached the same level of the experience, because he may have illumination and vision, but may not have continuous vision, but he has experience of God."

Because the dogmas act as medicines, when man is cured, when he arrives at glorification, they are unnecessary, as then man sees God, and definitions about God are not needed.

"We have Christ in front of us. Are we going to put words and concepts in between us? These will cease to exist in the experience of glorification. Even noetic prayer is unnecessary, as we have God Himself before us."

This means that glorification is participation in the glorifying energy of God, in which created words and concepts do not exist.

"Only the energy can be shared, and this energy of God transcends concepts and words. There are no concepts and words about the energies of God. We do not use these words and concepts to understand God, but to be united with God."

The fact that created words and concepts are transcended does not mean that they are abolished or abandoned by other Christians, as they are the path to being cured and glorification. They are divinely inspired words and concepts, which confirm the experience of glorification.

"In glorification Holy Scripture, theology and dogma are abolished. This is the purpose of Holy Scripture and dogma. In what

sense? They constantly remain for those who tread the path of purification and illumination. They also always remain in the state of glorification. The one who is glorified goes beyond these concepts and words and sees the uncreated reality, which has no similarity at all with them.

This does not mean, however, that these words and concepts can be abandoned, because, if someone does not proceed by means of these words and concepts, by means of purification and exertion, he will not reach glorification. That is the problem. These are the indispensable medicines to enable someone to reach glorification."

Someone who is glorified understands the difference between uncreated and created reality.

"When we say that Holy Scripture and dogma will be abolished in the vision of God, we do not mean that they will not be used. We mean the following: someone who reaches this experience understands the text of Holy Scripture and sees that these words and concepts that are in Holy Scripture do not correspond to the reality, that which is uncreated."

"The experience of Pentecost is completely unconnected with rational comprehension. Why? Because the experience goes beyond words and concepts. It transcends concepts and words."

2. The 'Heritage of Faith'

The Apostle Paul orders his disciple Timothy, *"O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust"* (1 Tim. 6:20). Elsewhere he exhorts him, *"That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us"* (2 Tim. 1:14). The fact that 'the Heritage' (*Parakatathiki*)* is preserved by the Holy Spirit Who dwells in man means that it refers to the mystery of the faith and not to theoretical truths.

> "The Heritage is the manifestation of the uncreated grace and energy of God and of the hypostatic union in Christ of the divine and human nature, which is the work of the infallible energy of the Holy Spirit, Who illumines the Prophets, Apostles and saints to guide the faithful to observe God's will and participate in the glory of Christ."

In essence, the Heritage is the mystery of the faith that is revealed to the saints and passed on by them to their spiritual children.

> "The Heritage of the Tradition existed before the creation of the world. It was revealed to the Prophets in the Old Testament and completed by the incarnation of the Word. It activates the purification, illumination and glorification of the faithful in the Church. This means that the Heritage of faith, that is to say, Holy Tradition, is not different from Holy Scripture, but is included within it. Although it is not different from Holy Scripture, it is not the same thing, because the Heritage-Tradition is identified with the Church. Also, the Heritage of Holy Tradition exists in Holy Scripture, when Holy Scripture is read and interpreted in the Church."

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* The Greek word *Parakatathiki* means 'that which has been committed to one's trust'. Although it is sometimes translated as 'deposit', its meaning is closer to 'trust', 'gift', 'heritage'. As *Parakatathiki* is not exactly equivalent to one English noun, we have rendered it as 'heritage', as this conveys the author's sense of 'a priceless treasure in the Church' better than 'deposit'. – Translator's note

Thus the Heritage of faith-Holy Tradition is broader in scope than Holy Scripture and is experienced within the Church. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

> "The Deposit of faith is the centre of the Holy Tradition and the power that shapes it. It presupposes a **giver**, Who is the Triune God, a **gift**, which is participation in the glory of God – of the unincarnate Word in the Old Testament and of the incarnate Word in the New Testament – and **recipients**, keepers and transmitters of the divine gift, who are the Prophets, Apostles and saints of the Church."

The Holy Tradition-Heritage, which is the mystery of the unincarnate and incarnate Word, is to be found in the Church. It is partly treasured up in Holy Scripture and it is contained in all the redemptive and conciliar liturgy and function of the Body of Christ, the Church. It is interpreted by the saints, but at the same time it remains a mystery.

> "It remains a mystery, because divine glory, like participation in this glory, transcends understanding and sense perception, although the whole human being is made glorified-*theoumenos* in God."

Christ Himself is the Heritage which the Church passes on through the Hierarchy down the centuries, "during the Divine Eucharist to bishops and priests on the day of their ordination, to be kept and transmitted through the bishops and priests for the sanctification and glorification of the faithful. Christ Himself, however, preserves, transmits and passes on the Heritage, which is Himself, together with His friends." Anyone who is cut off from the Church "ceases to be a bearer of the Heritage".

The Church is very closely linked with the Heritage-Tradition and Holy Scripture. The 'Heritage of faith' is the revelation of God, which was given by the unincarnate and incarnate Word to His friends, the Prophets, the Apostles and later the Fathers, and remains as a priceless treasure in the Church. This 'Heritage of faith' is recorded in Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, which we will discuss in the following chapters.

3. Holy Scripture

When we speak about Holy Scripture we mean the books of the Old and New Testaments, which were written by glorified Prophets and Apostles, and determined by the Church, through the holy Fathers, as a single unit for its purposes. The authors made no effort for their texts to be included in a Canon, in a collection of books that would make up Holy Scripture. This was done by the Church through the holy Fathers in the course of time.

> "The Apostle Paul himself never imagined that his Epistles would be included in the Canon of Holy Scripture. He never knew this, neither did the Evangelists know. When the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke were written, none of them ever imagined at the time they were alive that what they wrote would become Holy Scripture. For them the only thing that was Holy Scripture was the Old Testament. The New Testament did not exist. It never occurred to them to make a New Testament. There was the Old Testament.
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> Why did the New Testament come into existence? On account of heretics. To enable them to do battle against heretics it was necessary for them to say, 'We accept these books. The Apostles wrote these and did not write the ones which you say.' That was all there was to it. The New Testament took shape. And when the New Testament refers to, '*The Scripture which says...*' (Mark 15:28) it does not mean the New Testament, but only the Old Testament."

Some interesting points about Holy Scripture in general will be identified in this chapter and subsequent chapters will refer specifically to the Old and New Testaments.

a) Holy Scripture and Revelation

Revelation is the manifestation of God to the glorified saints in both the Old and New Testaments. Of course, the degree to which this

happened varied, and God always revealed Himself while concealing Himself, and hid Himself while manifesting Himself. He is a hidden God, because He reveals Himself according to His energies, but His essence cannot be shared or comprehended. This shows that Holy Scripture is not the revelation of God, but the word about the revelation.

"I pose the question: Is Holy Scripture about the revelation or is it the revelation itself? Are the words and concepts about God? That is to say, are they revelation? Do they reveal God? Or are they about the revelation? What is the revelation?

Some people think that the revelation means that the Holy Spirit comes upon the writer of Holy Scripture, sits here on his shoulders and says, 'Take up your pen' – in those days they had quills – 'and write.' And the Holy Spirit sits on his shoulders and says, 'Write: Thus says the Lord.' This is what God said. These are the very words that God said to the Prophet and to the Apostle.

The Fathers do not agree with this perception of revelation and divine inspiration. Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament was dictated by God. The writers were not God's secretaries, who sat and wrote down whatever God said, neither were the Ecumenical Councils like that.

So what is divine inspiration? Divine inspiration is the state in which man is inspired by God."

"The idea that Scripture can be identified with revelation is not only ridiculous from the patristic point of view, but clearly heretical. Scripture is not revelation, but the word about revelation. Scripture is the unique criterion for the authenticity of revelation, but revelation is not restricted, even in terms of time, to Scripture.

Scripture in itself does not constitute the uncreated glory of God in Christ, consequently Scripture is not revelation. Scripture is not Pentecost, but it speaks about Pentecost. The experience of Pentecost is included in Scripture and at the same time it transcends Scripture."

"Holy Scripture is not revelation, as some people think. Revelation transcends Holy Scripture, because revelation is the experience of Pentecost, which cannot be described. What we have in Scripture is not a description of Pentecost but a discussion about Pentecost,

about the revelation. Only someone who participates in the revelation knows what revelation is. He knows that it goes beyond understanding and expression. Holy Scripture is about the revelation. The purpose of Holy Scripture is not to give us the revelation enclosed within two covers.

We cannot take Holy Scripture, as the Protestants do, and say that it begins with the Book of Genesis and ends with the Book of Revelation, and all these pages with all these words in this collection, if we can call it that, this is the revelation, this is the word of God. Holy Scripture is not the word of God. It is about the Word of God. Always 'about', not the revelation itself or the word of God. In the Orthodox tradition, for us to describe Holy Scripture as the revelation or as the word of God is nonsense. It would be shameful for us, or rather heresy; more correct to say that it is nonsense and foolishness."

Revelation is an experience of uncreated reality. "God does not reveal words," whereas everything written by the participant in revelation is created words.

"Apart from that, Holy Scripture is not revelation, but contains concepts about the revelation and these concepts are divinely inspired. The purpose of these concepts, however, is not to teach created truths about the created world. That is not the aim. The aim of the divinely inspired concepts is to teach about uncreated, not created, truth. Consequently, no one is allowed to use Holy Scripture in order to support any sort of philosophy or positive science that he believes he is developing.

St Gregory Palamas was categorical on this issue and did not allow Barlaam to confuse the two truths. Nor did he allow him to use Holy Scripture for the purpose of cosmology, geology and so on, when he was trying to derive the positive sciences from Holy Scripture. The first people to study the natural world, because they believed that Holy Scripture was a revelation written by God, thought that by studying Holy Scripture they would learn truths about the universe."

Understanding Holy Scripture is not the same as living participation in the mystery of God, just as dogma is not the same as the mystery.

"Holy Scripture does not express God, nor does it give us the means by which we can understand God. It follows that the text of Holy Scripture is not a reference book that someone can read and think that, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, he can read it and through Holy Scripture he can understand God. This does not mean that he cannot understand Holy Scripture. Understanding Holy Scripture is not the same as understanding God. It is not the same thing.

Once more the difference relates to this distinction between the theology of dogma and mystery. Holy Scripture allows us to understand things about God, words and concepts about God. We understand the concepts and we understand the words, when we understand the purpose of the words and concepts. But this does not mean that these words and concepts express God or give us the means by which we can conceive God."

The view that Holy Scripture is identical with the revelation created all the heresies. It even caused conflicts with science.

"It is clear that the teaching that Holy Scripture is the revelation created many serious problems for the Church from the point of view of the positive sciences. Because we now know that there are human bones which have been proved to be from three and a half million years ago."

Western theology in the Middle Ages identified Holy Scripture with the revelation.

"The reason is that, due to Augustine, the Western perception of the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture and revelation was such that revelation was identified with Holy Scripture.

This created tremendous problems with the appearance of modern science and modern philosophy. As a result, things that are described in Holy Scripture are no longer accepted by modern science. For instance, the cosmology of Genesis shows amazing similarities when compared with Babylonian cosmology."

In the Papal tradition Holy Scripture was asserted to be God's revelation and this created many problems in science. At the same time, Holy Scripture was linked with the theology of Thomas Aquinas, who

was a scholastic philosopher, with the result that Russian and modern Greek theology were also influenced.

"Together with Russian conservatism, the modern Greek theological teaching dominated in Greece, as this teaching had always dominated in the Papal tradition, mainly because of Augustine, that the revelation from God is contained in Holy Scripture. If we want to say what revelation is (according to Augustine), revelation is essentially Holy Scripture, or at least it is included within Holy Scripture. In the act of divine inspiration, God revealed these concepts that are included in the Old and New Testaments to the Prophets and to the Apostles and since they are revealed by God, Holy Scripture cannot possibly contain any errors. As he is the mouth of God, and God knows everything as the Creator of the world, the divinely inspired writer who wrote the words of Holy Scripture cannot make the slightest mistake.

This became the basic reason why modern science went through difficult years with the Papal Church, as you are well aware. There were people who were burnt as heretics because they made scientific discoveries that were not in accordance with what the Papal Church and Holy Scripture said, at least in the way the Papal Church interpreted it.

Alongside Holy Scripture in the Western tradition, Thomas Aquinas had also acquired almost infallible status. The student of theology in the Middle Ages had the Holy Scripture and Thomas Aquinas. There were Churches which had Holy Scripture and the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas on the Holy Table, on the 'Altar' as they call it.

Thomas Aquinas acquired tremendous authority in the Papal Church, because he lived in an era when Aristotle finally became known in the West, by means of translations that had been made by the Arabs of Spain. At that period the oppressed Romans of France were leaving to study in Spain. They learnt Arabic and finally, from that tradition, translations were made of Aristotle from the Arabic and there was a major problem with regard to interpreting Aristotle."

Holy Scripture does not get involved with science, however, as it has a different purpose. It uses the science of its era, which is also why it should not be regarded as a revelation of God.

"For Heidegger, why is Christianity a science? Because he accepts Holy Scripture as revelation. That is the problem: he accepts Holy Scripture as revelation. And as Holy Scripture is revelation, Holy Scripture is the basis of Christian theology as a positive science.

Yes, but for patristic theology this is nonsense, because Holy Scripture is not revelation. Holy Scripture is about revelation and about the Word of God, but we do not identify Holy Scripture with revelation. We Orthodox traditionally reject the divine inspiration 'to the letter' of Holy Scripture. So, at least for Orthodoxy, Holy Scripture cannot be regarded as positive science from the point of view of 'to the letter' divine inspiration, nor from the point of view of Holy Scripture being identical to the revelation and word of God.

For us Holy Scripture is words and concepts; it is some of the words and concepts about God. For us, when we say that words and concepts about God are abolished in the experience of glorification, this also applies to Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture too is abolished in the experience of glorification.

Western theologians take St Gregory Palamas and the Eastern Fathers and accuse them on this account, because they are scandalised that the Fathers regard Holy Scripture as something temporary. Why? For Western Christians Holy Scripture is the revelation. It is as if you were to abolish the Koran for Muslims. Would that be possible? Because the Koran for Muslims is not just a revelation, but came down from heaven. The Koran is even uncreated. The Koran exists for ever with God.

The Franks believed something similar in the Middle Ages and Western Christians continue on these lines. They are shocked when an Orthodox Christian tells them that Holy Scripture is not revelation and not the word of God."

Holy Scripture is not the revelation of God, but a word about the revelation given to the saints. Nor is it the word of God, but a word about the Word.

"On one occasion I saw in the minutes of a sub-committee that our own people, together with an Anglican theologian, supported a statement that Holy Scripture is the revelation and word of God. I wrote a short memorandum to the Synod of the Church of Greece and officially asked permission, so as not to get into trouble with anyone, to support, in the dialogue with the Anglicans, my view that Holy Scripture is neither the revelation nor the word of God, but is about the revelation and about the Word of God.

Well, on the basis of this distinction, we had a meeting in Moscow, where I now stated it openly. I was even ready to produce the document, if I encountered any obstacles from the Orthodox. But there was no need, because our people became disorientated, when they heard me saying these things. They were afraid that perhaps I knew something and they might be put to shame in front of foreigners, so they did not open their mouths. The documents were written and everywhere the idea was erased that Holy Scripture is the revelation or the word of God."

Generally, when we read Holy Scripture, we see the plan and will of God, but we are unable to understand God or to participate in Him, Who is a mystery. Also, Holy Scripture is not identical with the revelation.

b) The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture

The Apostle Paul writes to his disciple Timothy: *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"* (2 Tim. 3:16).

Much has been said and written about this subject of the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture, and most of it has created particular problems in the West. The question is whether Holy Scripture is divinely inspired because it is a word about the revelation, or whether the words and the particular scientific and historical information are also divinely inspired. How is divine inspiration to be understood?

First of all, as was noted earlier, the saints who are in the state of illumination and glorification are divinely inspired and they write with divine inspiration on issues connected with God's revelation, the

incarnation, the manifestation of the glory of God, the Church and the experience of glory of God in the Church.

"I ask you: Are only the writings of Holy Scripture divinely inspired, or are the writings of divinely inspired saints throughout history also divinely inspired? Because the greatest dose of divine inspiration ever seen in history was the experience of Pentecost. Pentecost is the highest form of glorification, the highest form of divine inspiration that has ever existed in history. It is the highest form that has existed until now."

There are experiences of divine inspiration in Holy Scripture, but the lives of people who have not been glorified is also described.

"Divine inspiration consists in the fact that Holy Scripture describes the experiences of glorified people, which are comprehensible to those who are glorified. But Holy Scripture does not describe only the life of the glorified. It also describes the experiences of the accursed and wrongdoers. There are many things in Holy Scripture.

Holy Scripture is not divinely inspired in the sense that God wrote it. There is no such divine inspiration as the Muslims believe in respect of the Koran or the Franks in the West of Holy Scripture. Divine inspiration of that sort does not exist. Divine inspiration to the letter has never been accepted by any Orthodox Christian, even the most conservative. That sort of divine inspiration is out of the question for us.

Student: - As regards the writer of the historical books, what sort of divine inspiration was that?

Reply: - In some cases we do not know who wrote them. They may have been historical documents kept in the Jewish Temple, which someone later put together. This issue of divine inspiration does not arise. In this case the description itself needs divine inspiration, when the divine inspiration of a particular human being is described. These documents have been mainly collected in the Old Testament.

If we take the Psalms, the Psalms themselves are divinely inspired and were written by divinely inspired people. This is obvious, because we know that they are used in noetic prayer. The Holy Spirit

Himself prays within man with these Psalms, when he is in a state of prayer. So we know that this is the case with the Psalms.

Other books, like the Books of the Maccabees, which are about wars, independence and similar things, we refer to as 'for reading' or 'profitable'. They are part of the history of divinely inspired people, because the Maccabeans are saints of the Church. The struggle of the Maccabeans was a holy struggle."

The criterion used by the Church in drawing up what is called the Canon of Holy Scripture was not divine inspiration, but the confrontation of heretics, the guidance of the faithful and curing people.

"The fact that the early Church did not include a certain book within Holy Scripture does not mean that it did not regard it as divinely inspired. It may be divinely inspired and not be included, because the criterion was not divine inspiration."

Holy Scripture is divinely inspired, not only because it was written by divinely inspired writers, but because it is read by divinely inspired readers. A scientific book is valuable when it is read by scientists.

"In the dialogue (with other Confessions) they begin to see that Holy Scripture is not divinely inspired, and yet it is divinely inspired. Just as a book about astronomy is inspired by stars because it is read by someone who sees stars; but unless an astronomer reads it, it is not inspired by stars. A book about surgery is inspired by surgery, but in the hands of a charlatan it is a book of death, whereas in the hands of a surgeon it is inspired by surgery.

So it is with Holy Scripture. In the hands of someone inspired by God, who is in the state of illumination or glorification, it is divinely inspired. In the hands of a pseudo-theologian, however, Holy Scripture is nothing. He sits there with his imagination and tries to imagine what Holy Scripture says. He reads that Moses saw the Angel in the burning bush, the Angel of the Lord, Who told him, *'I AM the Existing One'*, *'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,'* and so on. And he says: 'These are myths', and passes over them without paying any attention. However, if we look at the icons, we see the words 'The Existing One', *o Ōn*. This signifies that it was Christ Who appeared to Moses and to all the Prophets of the Old Testament."

Thus Holy Scripture becomes a divinely inspired book for those who have the same experience as the Prophets and Apostles and are glorified.

The divine inspiration of Holy Scripture is not linked with infallibility from the scientific point of view. Holy Scripture is not a scientific book that aims to teach science. In any case, there is a difference between uncreated and created truth. Patristic teaching speaks of twofold truth: created and uncreated. Empirical theological truth is not the same as scientific truth. There is not one single truth.

"This reminds me of the conflict between Barlaam the Calabrian and St Gregory Palamas. I think this is where we should begin.

I mentioned Gregory of Nyssa, who makes a very good comment, something delightful. When he is discussing the particular issue of the extent to which the soul is united with the body, he says, 'Some people call upon Holy Scripture when they teach such things, but I am not interested in what Holy Scripture says. I am interested in the truth.' That is what Gregory of Nyssa says.

The stance that St Gregory Palamas takes against Barlaam is very important. Barlaam maintains that there is one single truth, and we can know this truth either from Holy Scripture or from philosophy or from the positive sciences. Because Barlaam lived in an era when scientific activity had begun.

In opposition to Barlaam, St Gregory Palamas has certain specific views: there is no similarity at all between uncreated and created things. Consequently no one can confuse created truths with uncreated truths. They are not the same thing. Created truths are different from uncreated truths. As there is no similarity, created truth cannot be the means by which we know uncreated truth."

This means that Holy Scripture is not a source of scientific information. The divinely inspired writers use the scientific knowledge of their era, without getting involved in science. They had a different aim.

"In the 14th century there was an extremely interesting conflict between St Gregory Palamas and Barlaam the Calabrian. Barlaam asserted then that Holy Scripture was the source of scientific knowledge and St Gregory Palamas made fun of him, because he pointed out to him that there are two truths. There is created truth and un-

created truth. Holy Scripture is not a source of knowledge of created truth but of uncreated truth, which is the revelation of the uncreated glory of God. It is not a reference book on medicine or any other science. It is a book that was written in the context of the knowledge of the era in which it was written.

Where Holy Scripture is infallible and a guide for our life is on the subjects of purification, illumination and glorification, where glorification is the foundation of the knowledge of God possessed by the Prophets, Apostles and saints of the Church."

The cosmology of Holy Scripture is taken from the knowledge of that era. In other words, facts are included in Holy Scripture that do not form part of the faith. Holy Scripture does not get involved with science.

"In the past the acceptance of Holy Scripture from the scientific and historical point of view was not an issue. If you accept Holy Scripture on these subjects nowadays you can come to grief. There are things in Holy Scripture that are not part of the faith. Say, for instance, that a girl is raped in the Old Testament. Is that a matter of faith? What has that to do with dogma, glorification or illumination? It is a sin, something unlawful. Is that part divinely inspired?

Then there is the cosmology of the Old Testament. When the Old Testament talks about the firmament, this is Babylonian cosmology. In that period the people of the Middle East observed that, when they dug a well, they found water underground. They saw rain falling from the sky, and often there were floods. If you read the Psalms carefully you will see that there are storehouses up in the sky. You open the door, as in the shower, and water falls down. Therefore the way they imagined the creation was that in the beginning there was God, Who created the firmament. The earth was in the middle of the waters and afterwards He suspended the firmament, to support the waters above it, and we have the earth to retain the water below. We are in the middle and live between the waters. This is the cosmology of the Old Testament. Does it bear any relation to reality? If we say that Holy Scripture is inspired to the letter, it becomes ridiculous. Certain renowned 'apologists' used to promote such ideas in the past, but they are complete nonsense."

We can use an example from astronomy on the subject of the timing of creation.

"The furthest star that has been discovered to date - from an article that I read, I don't know since then up until today what has happened - is ten billion light-years away. A light-year is six trillion miles and is the distance that a photon travels in one year.

Well, now that we have these perceptions of time, the things that the Hebrews used to say about, for instance, five thousand and sixty years from the creation of the world are foolishness. Because, if we take the Old Testament, the world, the whole universe, is about six thousand years old.

It is obvious that the chronology given by Holy Scripture does not correspond with reality. Yet apologists are still trying to say that Holy Scripture describes everything wonderfully, without any mistakes..."

The divinely inspired saints also use historical events of their time, but they are not divinely inspired historians.

"If we find sources outside the Bible that bear witness to the fact that the Apostle Luke made a mistake of half a year in a date, and called a king by the wrong name or something of that kind, what does it matter? His aim was not to give an accurate account of the history of the world. He wanted to speak about the work of the Holy Spirit among the Apostles and the faithful. That was his purpose. A surgeon may refer to certain historical events in his book, but if he makes the odd mistake in his books on historical matters, what does it matter? It is of no concern to us.

This is how I, at least, approach the whole subject of the attempt by some mindless people to turn Holy Scripture into a scientific reference book for the 20th century. These things are unacceptable. They are nonsense. We should pay no attention to this subject."

Mistakes of this kind were made by Western Christians.

"Until the development of modern science, they accepted Holy Scripture not only as a book of religious and theological knowledge, but also of scientific knowledge.

Perceptions about the world and cosmology were based on Holy

Scripture, since they believed that Holy Scripture was divinely inspired, in the sense that God dictated the actual text. Since God wrote Holy Scripture and the divinely inspired writers wrote Holy Scripture by the inspiration of God, it follows that whatever is written in Holy Scripture is true. That is the end of the matter."

Holy Scripture cannot be regarded as an authority for scientific information.

"No one who is serious can take Holy Scripture as an authority in the positive sciences. That is out of the question. The development of more recent science so undermined the idea that Holy Scripture was a book of scientific truths, that in the West the whole perception of divine inspiration was demolished as well."

c) Conservative and Liberal

The characterisations 'conservative' and 'liberal' have been used to excess in the West with regard to Holy Scripture. From the West they spread to Russian theology and reached Greece. Someone who accepts that the whole of Holy Scripture is God's revelation is described as conservative, whereas a liberal denies that the whole of Holy Scripture is the revelation of God.

"The conservative line in Europe and Russia is characterised by the theologian's commitment to the idea that Holy Scripture is revelation. In Europe and America today, someone who accepts the whole of Holy Scripture from start to finish as revelation is graded 100% conservative. He is 100% conservative. Someone who accepts certain things in Holy Scripture as revelation, depending on how much he accepts, is 75% conservative, 50% conservative, or 60%, 70%, 100% liberal. Someone who rejects Holy Scripture as revelation is 100% liberal. Someone who accepts something in Holy Scripture as revelation can be from 10% to 50%, 70%..."

The conservatives and liberals in the West are also defined according to their acceptance of divine inspiration in Holy Scripture.

"Who is conservative and what does conservative mean? Conservative is a definition that comes from the Protestants and Catholics.

Someone who believes in the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture to the letter, and that Holy Scripture is a scientific book, which does not contain any mistakes, is a conservative. Someone becomes liberal to the extent to which he departs from this line; the lighter he is in this respect, the more liberal he is. If he abandons this line completely, he is an extreme liberal on the issue of the literal divine inspiration of Holy Scripture.

From the Orthodox point of view, divine inspiration of Holy Scripture to the letter, the idea that God sat by the mouth of the writers and dictated the writing of Holy Scripture, is heresy. From a patristic viewpoint it is heresy. So how can an Orthodox Christian be conservative in this sense?"

It is clear that the terms 'conservative' and 'liberal' started from biblical criticism and extended to other issues, such as the degree of acceptance of Ecumenical Councils and the entire ecclesiastical tradition.

"The issue of conservatives and liberals arose in the West with biblical criticism of the Old and New Testaments. The more faithful someone is to the idea of divine inspiration of Holy Scripture as a whole, the more he is regarded as conservative. Anyone who departs from the idea that Holy Scripture is divinely inspired, or at least that particular parts of Holy Scripture are divinely inspired, is seen as liberal. So liberals and conservatives in the West are mainly associated, in the hearts of Protestants, with how they regard Holy Scripture and the authority of Holy Scripture.

The most conservative of Protestants will be someone who accepts that, from the first chapter of Genesis to the book of Revelation, there can be no mistake in the whole of that text. He is the most conservative. After that, someone moves away from conservatism according to how far he moves away from this idea. Then he may be conservative about certain books of Holy Scripture, but not about others, because he does not accept them as genuine texts. In that case, they discuss their authenticity or lack of it, and someone may be conservative in that respect.

Anyway, in the Orthodox Church the whole subject of conservatism has been cut to pieces in the last few years. If we take univer-

sity theology as an indication, there are some who restrict divine inspiration to specific parts of Holy Scripture, not the whole of Holy Scripture. This is because nowadays it has become customary among us too to speak about the theology of John, the theology of Matthew, the theology of Luke, of Mark, the theology of the Apostle Paul, the theology of the Pastoral Epistles, as if these were different from St Paul's other Epistles.

Then there is the theology of the other Epistles, of Holy Scripture not written by Paul, and the theology of the book of Revelation. We have become accustomed to speak about the theology of the different writers of Holy Scripture. The question of whether or not everything is divinely inspired has ended up becoming a secondary issue.

Conservative Orthodox are those who accept the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture and the Ecumenical Councils. We also inherited this from the years of Turkish domination. This idea was widespread. Thus we have Holy Scripture, the Ecumenical Councils, then we have the Canons of the Church. So today the most conservative will also include the Canons as divinely inspired. They label the Canons of the Church as divinely inspired and infallible as well.

The extraordinary thing is that the whole issue of divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, the Ecumenical and Local Councils, the Canons and so on is discussed in a strange way, at least from the point of view of the Tradition. In the Church's Tradition, if you read the lives of the saints and the history of the Church in general, you will see that divine inspiration is regarded as a natural condition for Christians who are in a certain state."

With regard to Holy Scripture, Ecumenical Councils and sacred Canons, we have to look at the purpose for which they were intended.

d) The Aim of Holy Scripture

As Holy Scripture does not aim to get involved with science and to teach scientific knowledge, what is its purpose?

The divinely inspired writers both of Holy Scripture and of the patristic texts used the world around them and accepted the scientific and historical knowledge of their era, but their aim was to guide people so

that they would reach the height of Pentecost and acquire knowledge and experience of God.

We do not read Holy Scripture in order to scrutinise the words so as to understand God. Holy Scripture is an aid to lead man to glorification, at which point he will acquire knowledge of God. We must make a distinction between the meaning of Holy Scripture and the words. The meaning has great significance for salvation.

> "What is the purpose of Holy Scripture? That we should read it like philosophers and quibble about the words? And use our own concepts to understand God and reflect profoundly on what the New Testament is trying to say? Or is the aim of the New Testament to be abolished in the experience of glorification?"
>
> "The meaning is the aid someone needs to be able to reach glorification. It is the signpost that can guide man to the experience of glorification. For that reason, Holy Scripture, patristic theology and the theology of the Councils can never be used by any kind of philosophy.
>
> The one and only aim of the language of Holy Scripture, the Fathers and the Councils is to be used as the spiritual means by which someone can be led, under the guidance of a spiritual father, through the stages of perfection. They have no other purpose."

We use the words and concepts of Holy Scripture ascetically, in order to reach glorification.

> "Some people believe to this day that the positive sciences are opposed to Holy Scripture. This discussion ought to cease once and for all, if we take St Gregory Palamas's word as law, and understand what divinely inspired concepts are and what their aim is. The Fathers of the Church tell us that the aim of these concepts is not to reveal to us the mystery of created things, as the only way the divinely inspired concepts can be of service to us is for us to use them ascetically, in order to have the experience of glorification.
>
> Therefore the aim of the concepts in Holy Scripture is purely ascetical, not scientific. It is not intended that we should track down from scriptural concepts what matter or the heavenly bodies are composed of, or how the structure of the universe functions."

Since asceticism is connected with the sciences of therapeutic treatment, the aim of which is man's glorification, the purpose of Holy Scripture is therapeutic. It aims to cure man so that he may progress from being in God's image to being in His likeness.

> "The essence of Holy Scripture is this therapeutic method that inevitably produces the desired results from Holy Scripture."

Holy Scripture contains catechetical and therapeutic books that have divinely inspired words and concepts, as they correctly diagnose spiritual states and cure us, that is to say, they lead us to glorification. These are not philosophical words and concepts but supremely theological ones.

> "In the state of illumination we have noetic worship. In Holy Scripture we have the interpretation of illumination and glorification, but when glorification comes, interpretation comes to an end, because we have the reality. This does not mean, however, that Holy Scripture is abolished as a catechetical, therapeutic and divinely inspired book. Neither are the patristic writings abolished, nor the decisions of the Councils. All these have permanent significance for the Church and cannot be superseded. They are not superseded, but someone can go beyond them, though only if he reaches glorification and only as long as glorification lasts. When he returns to illumination, once again he prays continuously, offers rational worship, celebrates the Liturgy, interprets Holy Scripture, catechises and teaches. In this context, Holy Scripture, the patristic writings and the decisions of the Councils are the Symbols of the faith."

From the point of view of methodology, the words and concepts of Holy Scripture are intended to cure those who are spiritually sick. Holy Scripture teaches us how to be cured, how to be freed from the passions and how the old Adam, the 'old man', will depart from within us.

e) The Interpretation of Holy Scripture

Holy Scripture was written by divinely inspired men, which means that its interpretation requires special care, because someone ought to have the same experience as the Prophets and Apostles in order to

interpret it. This applies in all the sciences, as a medical scientist, for example, is able to understand the research of another medical scientist.

Some people, in order to interpret Holy Scripture, study the words. But the words used by God-seers belong to the world around them, so the commentator who uses this method will be unable to understand the 'spirit' of Holy Scripture.

> "The more the Papal and Protestant theologians examine the vocabulary of the Old Testament, the more convinced they become that almost all of it is to be found in the environment. It has now been proved by contemporary archaeology that even the Hebrew language originates from the language of the Phoenicians – that is to say, the Canaanites – and is the language of those conquered by the Hebrews.
>
> When the Hebrews returned to the Promised Land, they found a people who spoke the Canaanite language. They mixed with them and the result was the emergence of the Hebrew language. It is clear that in the time of Abraham the faithful Hebrews did not speak Hebrew, but spoke the Syriac of that era and that region."

Others use the philological method to investigate Holy Scripture. Such methods are of some use, but they need to be combined with the experience of the glorified.

> "How was it possible for people to interpret Holy Scripture on the basic issues? I am not referring to the details, for instance, of a Hebrew word: what it was in the original and how it is written in Greek, whether it refers to 'Elohim', and whether it is from an 'Elohist' source, or a 'Yahwist', 'Priestly' or 'Deuteronomy' source – those philological issues, with which those who brought them from Europe and America bemuse us.
>
> These things are all very well. I grew up with them in America. I studied these things in my youth. And afterwards you gradually begin to say: These things are all very well. It is pleasant to sit there working out rational theories, but what relation do they bear to theology? These are philological methods."

Other people do archaeological or philological research on the books of Holy Scripture.

"Now they are trying to understand Holy Scripture by every possible means. Many archaeological and philological research projects have been undertaken, mostly based on the principle that, in order to understand what the author writes, we must study very carefully the environment from which Holy Scripture originated.

So they do archaeological and philological work on the ancient texts. They identify the script of the portion of Holy Scripture, when it was written, in what position it was written, and an attempt is made by the archaeologists to reconstruct the environment in which Holy Scripture was written. They have actually found whole sections of Old Testament which now fit into certain contexts, and within those archaeological contexts the terminology and certain particular features and traditions of a specific era or century in the past become comprehensible. So the philological-critical method of research on Holy Scripture has been very productive. There is no doubt about that."

The problem is that heretics also study Holy Scripture, but interpret it in accordance with their own criteria.

"Heretics knew Holy Scripture very well. In order for someone to become a bishop in those days, he had to know all the Psalms by heart and to interpret the Psalms. Today they think that someone became a heretic because he did not know Holy Scripture well. But I fear that those who know Holy Scripture better may become heretics! Why? Because they do not have the right interpretative keys. How do we know that the Word is uncreated? And that the Holy Spirit is uncreated? We know from Holy Scripture. But how do we know how to interpret Holy Scripture? On the basis of the experience of the glorified."

There are Protestant theologians who, when they interpret Scripture, talk about demythologising it by removing all the images and symbols that have been taken from the surrounding world.

"We ask ourselves: Is it Holy Scripture and the theology of the early theologians that needs demythologising, or is it simply the interpretation of the Franks and Protestants that needs demythologising and not Holy Scripture. Because in our own theology, patristic theology, such perceptions never existed."

If the Protestants, who read Holy Scripture every day, do not understand the methodology that leads to glorification and how the human body becomes a sacred relic, they cannot understand Holy Scripture.

"I remember someone I met in America – we gave lectures together. We were in Denmark and we used to eat together, and we were going to eat with some other people. I joked with him – I would have been twenty-four years old then – and said, 'The Protestants will only understand Holy Scripture when they understand sacred relics,' by which I meant glorification."

Even the devil interprets Holy Scripture, as is clear from the temptations of Christ, when he used words from Holy Scripture.

"The devil can do as much interpretation of Holy Scripture as he likes."

"The devil starts teaching how to interpret Holy Scripture, how to teach about the person of Christ, and he becomes a teacher of Christianity."

"The devil also knows the Old and New Testaments off by heart. It is not only Christians who know them."

As we said earlier, Holy Scripture, is divinely inspired because it was written by divinely inspired saints and is interpreted and used by those who are divinely inspired. If it is put in other contexts, it is misinterpreted. If someone depends on the Church as an institution and rejects the experience of the glorified, or if someone depends solely on Holy Scripture, but isolates it from the experience of the glorified, he destroys their purpose.

"Augustine, however, set aside the experience of the glorified and replaced the experience of the glorified with two things: the Church and Holy Scripture, that is to say, books, written texts. He shifted the authority in the Church. Exactly as the Orthodox do today. Contemporary Orthodox do just the same. 'The Church says...', or, 'Holy Scripture says...', or, 'The Ecumenical Council says...'."

Holy Scripture belongs within the Church's acts of worship, so it is read during the Divine Liturgy and services. This is how Scripture is interpreted.

"If someone wants to become a theologian, it is better for him to read the hymns of the Church. Blessed were those of former times, who had neither the University of Athens nor the University of Thessalonica where they could study. They only had the liturgical books and the Fathers. They read them and were first class Orthodox theologians.

The University of Athens was founded. Halki was founded. Afterwards they sent young people to study Holy Scripture, biblical criticism, interpretation and so on with the Western Christians. What did they bring from the West? The theology of the Franks! The mistakes of Augustine, which became the foundations of the interpretative tradition of Western Christians up to the present day, these are what they brought to Greece. But before they brought them here to Greece, they had taken them to Russia."

The holy Fathers interpret Holy Scripture through their experience. The same can be observed in science, as scientists interpret other scientists who know the same subject-matter. For someone to understand Holy Scripture it is not enough for him to be a philologist or a historian. He must be glorified.

"There is no need for someone to be an academic in order to undertake this interpretation. The interpretative method of the Fathers does not come only from books that they read, but also from their experience. So when they speak about dogmas, they not only interpret texts but also speak from their experience. In the same way as an astronomer, who when he teaches, does not speak only from astronomical books, but also looks through the telescope and corroborates with the telescope what is written in the books. In fact the telescope is more important than the books.

Thus, in patristic theology, the nous of those who are illuminated is even more important than books. When the nous is in the state of illumination, it is like an astronomer looking through the telescope."

Since man has nous and reason, the Fathers interpret the Scriptures with their illuminated nous, and confront heretics by exercising their reason.

"In the battle against heretics, they used reason. Enlightened by their illuminated nous, they correctly interpreted Holy Scripture and strove against heretics. The struggle against heretics was directed by the illuminated nous, but it was carried out by reason."

The Apostle Paul and all the Fathers teach that the interpretation of Holy Scripture is a gift of grace. It is actually referred to as a 'prophetic gift'. They can therefore recognise others who have the same prophetic gift.

"If someone does not know about noetic prayer, he cannot interpret the Apostle Paul correctly. The Protestants have been reading Holy Scripture for years now. Have they ever found out on their own from Holy Scripture about noetic prayer? Never. Now that the Orthodox draw their attention to this phenomenon they see noetic prayer in Holy Scripture."

Someone who participates in the illuminating and glorifying energy of God has correct knowledge of the Old and New Testaments, and interprets and applies them rightly.

"Who will implement correctly the teaching of the Old and New Testaments on illumination and glorification? Someone who has no idea about illumination and glorification, or someone who is in the state of illumination and knows what this illumination is?

This means that, for the Fathers of the Church, Holy Scripture is exactly what a reference book on surgery is for the surgeon, or one on biology for the biologist. Holy Scripture is not simply a book that someone can pick up and imagine that the Holy Spirit will come and enlighten him to read it correctly."

If someone does not have experience of his own, he should interpret Holy Scripture based on the interpretation of the glorified.

Studying Holy Scripture without someone who has seen God, or been illumined or glorified does not lead to correct interpretation and understanding. Holy Scripture was not only written by people inspired by God, but is also read by those who are inspired by God. The reader ought to be inspired by God in order to interpret it well. In all the sciences reading books is closely linked with the practical experience and knowledge of those who wrote them.

"This connection between scientist, book, live teaching and pupil also exists in the patristic perception of Holy Scripture. Of course, in patristic theology Holy Scripture is regarded as divinely inspired. It was written by divinely inspired people. But what contemporary Orthodox overlook is that the reader of Holy Scripture ought also to be divinely inspired, in order to understand correctly. Not only the writer but also the reader should be divinely inspired, so that the reading is correct. If this state of divine inspiration does not exist, Holy Scripture does not become comprehensible as a book. Then anyone can take it, read it and interpret it however he likes, without us ever being sure that the interpretation is correct.

What has happened in Christianity, in contemporary Orthodoxy, is that the books of Holy Scripture have been cut off from the practicality of divine inspiration as regards both the writer and the reader, and anyone who has any sort of relevant education thinks that he can take Holy Scripture and read it, in the same way as he does with any of his other interests, and understand it."

Holy Scripture becomes divinely inspired when it is interpreted by divinely inspired commentators, because when it is interpreted by heretics, it is not regarded as divinely inspired.

"Is the Old Testament as a book not divinely inspired? As a book it is not divinely inspired. When do the Old Testament and the New Testament become divinely inspired? When the one reading them is divinely inspired. When someone who is divinely inspired reads a book, the book becomes divinely inspired. That is to say, if I read a book about surgery and attempt to put it into practice, I would not become a charlatan, but someone far worse than a charlatan. I would automatically become a complete butcher. It is different if I am a surgeon and read the book about surgery as a surgeon. As the writer has the latest method of surgery, I who know the latest methods will find that book divinely inspired, that is to say, inspired by surgery, because I who read it am also inspired by surgery.

So Holy Scripture only becomes a divinely inspired book for those who are glorified, in the first place, and, secondly, for those who are illuminated. Someone who is glorified has the same experience

as Moses and the Apostles at Pentecost had, and as he has the same experience, he understands Holy Scripture.

This is why I insisted for many years at the University on this point, that the theological method of the Orthodox Church and the patristic tradition is empirical. Here is Greece, at least, theology is a branch of philosophy. They think that they ought to study philosophy in order to understand Orthodox theology."

Here too what was mentioned earlier applies, that when someone is counted worthy of theoria (vision) of God, the Old and New Testaments are transcended. Even the God-seer, however, uses the divinely inspired words of Holy Scripture after the experience of divine vision.

"In the experience of glorification the Old and New Testaments are abolished. Theology is abolished. Theologians are abolished. Because the theologian becomes glorified. He has experience of the reality that is called God, Who goes beyond reason and everything, because there is no similarity between God and the world.

When, however, someone returns from the experience of glorification, he has divinely inspired words, which means that he is inspired by his experience, in such a way that through the concepts inspired by this experience – this is why they are called divinely inspired – he guides other people. He does not, however, give concepts to others, in order that they should understand only the concepts. He gives them concepts, so that they should use them as means by which man can progress through purification to illumination and finally to glorification. This is the purpose of the concepts."

Consequently, anyone who has personal experience also understands the experience of the God-seeing saints.

4. Old and New Testaments

Holy Scripture is divided into two main parts: the books of the Old Testament, before the incarnation of the Son and Word of God, and the books of the New Testament, after the incarnation of the Word. Both the Old and the New Testaments were given by revelation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, to the Prophets of the Old Testament by the unincarnate Word, as the Angel of Great Counsel, and to the Apostles of the New Testament by the incarnate Word – Christ.

In its worship and calendar of feasts the Church uses passages from the Old and New Testaments as readings. The readings for Vespers, which interpret the feasts of the Lord and the saints, come from the Old Testament, and the readings for the Divine Liturgy come from the New Testament.

The word 'Testament' denotes someone's will, which is recorded and confirmed by his signature. In both Testaments the Second Person of the Holy Trinity appeared to the Prophets and Apostles. The revelation was granted to them. An agreement was made and it was sealed with the blood of sacrifice in the Old Testament, and the blood of Christ in the New Testament.

We therefore study the Old and New Testaments using the interpretative keys given by the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers and preserved within the Church.

a) The Value of the Old Testament

In the West the Old Testament has been noticeably underrated and disregarded in comparison with the New Testament. This is explained by the fact that Christ, and everything He said, is held in greater honour than the words of the Prophets of the Old Testament.

> "The Westerners' preconception is that we also have the Old Testament, which they rate at a very low level. The Old Testament

is almost nothing for the Protestants and the Latins. Afterwards Christ comes and then the true faith begins. Then we have the era of the Apostles, from the public teaching of Christ until the crucifixion, burial, resurrection, ascension and so on. After that we have the Church."

"Western theologians read the Old Testament and do not find much in the Old Testament that relates to the New Testament. Thus, from the point of view of Protestant and Papal research, one part of Scripture has been cut off from the other. This separation is almost complete in the view of non-Orthodox, whereas for the Orthodox there is no difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Whatever is in the New Testament is also in the Old Testament. The only difference is the incarnation and the work of redemption: 'By death He trampled down death, and on those in the tombs bestowing life.' The redeeming acts and the incarnation are the new elements, as is the verification, through the experience of Pentecost, that the Holy Spirit is a distinct and particular hypostasis, Who is neither a hypostasis of the Word nor of the Father, nor is He an energy, but a particular hypostasis."

The Fathers of the Church did not see the Old and New Testaments divided into 'Law' and 'Grace', but from the perspective of the stages of perfection.

Another serious issue is that Western theologians supported the view, as we see in Barlaam, that divine manifestations in the Old Testament are transitory. They are different from the theophanies of the New Testament.

The Fathers of the Church did not hold such views. It is characteristic that St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, whose teaching is the same as the Eastern Fathers', guided blessed Augustine to prepare himself prior to Baptism by reading the Old Testament.

"Augustine tells us that in the beginning he paid attention to the form of the words. Because he was a teacher of rhetoric he noted the form, the layout of the speech, not so much the content. But gradually, as time passed, he began to notice the content as well. Then he realised that Christians have an interpretation of the Old

Testament that differs a great deal from the Manichaeans. The Manichaean perception of the Old Testament is that the Old Testament belongs to the god of darkness. The Old Testament is a work of darkness, whereas the New Testament and their own writings belong to the Light.

Be that as it may, he tells us that Ambrose opened his eyes to subjects relating to the Old Testament, and he began to see things differently, in combination now with his Platonism. Then he decided to be baptised. He sent a letter to Ambrose from the place where he was on holiday, announcing his decision to be baptised the following Easter and asking what he ought to do in preparation.

Ambrose wrote him a letter telling him to read Isaiah and study him well in preparation for Baptism. Augustine confesses to us in his *Philosophical Dialogues* that he took up Isaiah to study him, read a few chapters, understood nothing and therefore took refuge in philosophical discussions with certain pupils and with his friends who were there, in a house lent to him by an acquaintance for the holidays. He was also slightly unwell; he had a bad cough and needed to recover.

It is clear that when he was preparing for Baptism he thought that there was no difference between Christianity and Platonism. For someone with the slightest knowledge of the differences between the two, this is a very strange conviction, to say the least, that he took with him to Baptism."

b) Links between the Old and New Testaments

From the Orthodox viewpoint there is a close relationship between the Old and New Testaments. The difference that will be identified below is that the God revealed in the Old Testament is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity unincarnate, the Angel of Great Counsel, whereas the God revealed in the New Testament is the incarnate Word. It follows that the difference is the incarnation and the existence of the Church as the Body of Christ. Everything else is common to both.

First of all, in both the Old and New Testaments there are created words and concepts by which uncreated reality is communicated.

Then the anthropology is common to both the Old and New Testaments, namely, that man, who went far away from God and lost communion with Him, is spiritually ill. This is the single interpretative key for interpreting the whole of Holy Scripture.

"In the Old Testament there are men called Prophets and these Prophets had a specific experience. This experience is described, as far as this is possible, in the Old Testament. We find something similar in the New Testament. Afterwards, linked with this experience of the Prophets and Apostles, there is also their preaching and the entire method that they use to try and introduce the faithful to the same experience.

So we have this phenomenon, that in both the Old and New Testaments, if someone wants to find, in my opinion, the key to Holy Scripture and patristic tradition, there is one thing he must understand: in both the Old and New Testaments there is a specific anthropology.

When I say 'anthropology' I do not mean it from a philosophical point of view. I mean more from a theological point of view, that there is a being who is called man. This human being has a tendency to weakness and sickness. Man is sick. Why is he sick? Because he is not in the state of glorification. Glorification is regarded as man's natural state. As he is neither in the state of glorification nor in the state of illumination, man is spiritually and socially sick. He has an unhealthy personality, he has lost what we would nowadays call personality and has become self-centred, selfish and timid. He does not function correctly as a human being. There are different people at different levels, from cannibal to refined philosopher, but none of them lives correctly. Why not? Because their system does not work as it should."

Sick and fallen man has selfish love and cares only for himself. He does not love God and other people. He has to be cured, to attain to unselfish love. This is achieved through Christ, Who alone is healthy and sinless.

"From the point of view of Orthodox tradition and Jewish tradition – ancient Jewish tradition, that is, the Old Testament – the human being who does not have unselfish love is ill, that is why

he does not have it. He may want to have it, but he does not know how to acquire it. He is unable to acquire it and he ought to know how to obtain it.

He is like someone who is sick and knows he is sick, but does not know how to be cured. I know that someone else is healthy. I know that I am ill. But how will I be cured if I do not know how to be cured and to become like the other one who is not sick?

The one who is supremely well and sinless in the whole history of humanity is Christ. How can man become like Christ, Who is the only one Who was not only free from sickness, but was also born free from sickness, whereas all the rest of us were born sick, and everyone in the Old Testament and everyone in the New Testament was born sick? Only Christ was born sinless and not sick. Can we become like Christ because we want to be? Well, we may want to be, but how will we achieve it?"

The question of how we will achieve unselfish love, which constitutes the cure of our being and spiritual health, is what concerns the Prophets, Apostles and the Fathers of the Church. It is connected with the activation of the noetic faculty in the heart.

Throughout Holy Scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments, we encounter the fact that the noetic faculty (energy) functions in the heart, and through it someone acquires knowledge of God. Meanwhile the rational faculty (energy) acts in the reason through thoughts (*logismoi*) and by means of it man relates to his surroundings.

In order to be cured, man has to pass through the stages of the spiritual life, which are purification of the heart, illumination of the nous and glorification. These stages of perfection are identified in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

This is the perspective in which the Law should be viewed in the Old Testament, together with the rites of purification and all the commandments in general. The Mosaic Law is clearly ascetic in character and consists of purification of the heart and progress towards illumination and glorification. Thus there are not only words and concepts in the Old Testament, but also the experience of glorification which goes beyond words and concepts.

"We have a very basic problem in contemporary Orthodox theology. What is the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament? In the Old Testament do we have the revelation of the truth? Do we have the experience of glorification, which transcends words and concepts? Or do we only have words and concepts in the Old Testament?

The Augustinian tradition tells us that we have words and concepts, things that come and go, but we have nothing in the way of experiences that compares with the New Testament. So neither the Protestants nor the Latins understand the Old Testament as we Orthodox do. For the Fathers of the Church, all the Prophets had reached glorification."

c) Difference between the Old and New Testaments

As has been pointed out already, the experiences of the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers, of the Old and New Testaments, are identical. The spiritual life is common to both, the stages of perfection are the same, glorification is lived by the glorified saints. There are, however, differences as well.

The first difference is that the unincarnate Word appears in the Old Testament, whereas in the New the incarnate Word appears. This has been emphasised in detail elsewhere.

The second difference is that the glorification of the Prophets in the Old Testament had a temporary character, as death had not been abolished. The glorification of the Apostles in the New Testament, by contrast, is stable because of the existence of Christ's glorified human nature and the victory over death.

"The second great difference between the Old and New Testaments is between temporariness and permanence of participation in the glory of God. In the Old Testament participation is temporary. The experience of glorification is short-lived. Those who beheld the uncreated glory of the Word nevertheless died, both in body and soul. Now, however, through the incarnation, all who have seen the glory of the Word participate permanently in the glory of the Holy Trinity, because when the body dies, the soul does not undergo

death. The death of the soul is the absence of glorification, that is to say, the vision of God.

When someone in this life, now, attains to glorification, death no longer dominates him and the experience of glorification continues even after death. A very powerful sign and testimony regarding this fact is the holy relics. Holy relics exist because those who have left relics have left them as testimony to the resurrection of their bodies. That is why all together they make up the communion of the saints."

Generally speaking, the links between the Old and New Testaments and the differences between them can be set out in three basic questions.

"I pose certain questions. I do not offer any solution to these issues. I simply think that they ought to be examined and subjected to further research.

a) What has been revealed in the Old Testament? Was the truth revealed or is it lies? b) How does the Old Testament differ from the New? And c) What does Christ mean when He says, *'He will guide you into all truth'*? What is *'all truth'* and when was this *'all truth'* revealed? And if *'all truth'* has been revealed, this means that it ought to be regarded now as the highest pinnacle. And if we have a highest point after that pinnacle, we need to measure whether or not we still have that state. For *'all truth'* to be revealed there has to be a certain state. What was revealed as *'all truth'*? The dogma of the Holy Trinity? The dogma of the incarnation? What has been revealed as *'all truth'*? And when? Was it gradually revealed? As time passed, down through the ages? Or was it revealed all at once, in a revelational experience? And so on.

Our contemporary perceptions on these issues are not usually within the framework of the patristic tradition. One professor of ours has caught onto the word 'revelation' and says that even after Pentecost there is revelation. What revelation can there be after Pentecost? What does revelation mean to the Fathers of the Church? And how is revelation after Pentecost different from the revelation at Pentecost or the revelation before Pentecost or the revelation after the Resurrection, from the revelation before the Ascension, from

the revelation before the Resurrection, from the revelation before the incarnation?

We have revelations before the incarnation throughout the Old Testament. After the incarnation we have revelations. Before the Resurrection we have revelations. At the Resurrection and after the Resurrection we have revelations. Before the Ascension, during the event of the Ascension, there is the experience of the Ascension. Afterwards we also have Pentecost. Then the Fathers speak again about revelations. When the Fathers speak of revelation, what do they mean by the word? And what is the connection between revelation and divine inspiration?"

The answer to these questions is that in the Old Testament there is revelation of the unincarnate Word. This is truth not falsehood, but *"all truth"*, which was revealed on the day of Pentecost, is that the Church is the Body of Christ. The unincarnate Word is now incarnate. This is *"all truth"*.

"The basic difference between the Old and New Testaments is the incarnation. First of all the Word appears unincarnate to the Prophets. The first great difference: there is no incarnation in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, however, there is the Holy Trinity, Which appears to the Prophets, because the Word, Christ Himself, is manifested to the Prophets. For that reason, for us Orthodox Christians, the Old Testament is clearly Christocentric. The things that some people say about monotheism having been revealed in the Old Testament and so on, are incorrect."

This means that the difference between the Old and New Testaments is not the dogma of the Holy Trinity, but the incarnation.

"The Word, Who is unincarnate in the Old Testament, appeared without flesh. Now, however, the Word is incarnate and when He is revealed to man He is always revealed in the body. In the New Testament, the revelation concentrates on the human nature of Christ.

Since this is the case, even before Pentecost we have examples of glorification. We know from the Tradition about the glorification of the All-Holy Virgin, who entered the Temple at three years old. She reached the Holy of Holies, which means that the All-Holy Virgin

at three years of age had attained to the experience of glorification. She lived in the glory of God. She also beheld God from at least the age of three, and in this way she was made ready to be the Mother of God. That is one example.

Afterwards we have the example of the Baptism of Christ. We have the example of the two disciples of John. Later we have the Transfiguration, and then Pentecost. From the Transfiguration until Pentecost, however, Christ says that *'He will guide you into all truth'* (John 16:13). What is meant by these words, *'He will guide you into all truth'*? We have an experience of glorification in the Old Testament. The Holy Trinity has already been revealed to the Prophets: the Father in the Word and the Holy Spirit has been revealed to the Prophets.

We have the same revelation in the New Testament, but now the human nature of Christ is added. In the Transfiguration we have a revelation of the glory of Christ, by means of the human nature of Christ, but also in the cloud that overshadowed the Apostles. Afterwards we have Pentecost. Why is Pentecost the revelation of all truth and why is the Transfiguration not the revelation of all truth?"

The light which the Prophets of the Old Testament saw was the divine and uncreated Light, but there was no body. At the time of the Transfiguration of Christ, the Disciples saw Light issuing from the Body of Christ, which, however, was outside them, as they had not yet become members of the Body of Christ. From the day of Pentecost onwards, the holy Apostles and the saints see the Light through the Body of Christ, as they are members of this risen and glorified Body of Christ.

"That someone reaches glorification and has Light from within, means that the source of the Light is, of course, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but that it is also the human nature of Christ. Because of the hypostatic union, that is to say, on account of the fact that it is the body of the Word, not only the Word but also the flesh is a source of life. The vision of God, glorification, is a source of life.

This is the basic difference between the Old and New Testaments. This now, from the point of view of reality, is what is called the Church, historical ecclesiastical reality."

The visions of God in the New Testament are different from visions of God in the Old Testament, because now the human nature of the Word is a source of the uncreated energy of God and because the God-seers are members of the Body of Christ. Also because death has been abolished and glorification does not have a temporary character. Now the Church is the Body of Christ and there is no other truth beyond the Church. This is *"all truth"* that was revealed on the day of Pentecost and is experienced through the centuries by the faithful. After Pentecost there is no additional truth.

5. Holy Tradition and Traditions

So far we have identified the fact that Holy Tradition is the same as the Heritage of faith, which is broader in scope than Holy Scripture. Part of the Tradition was recorded in Holy Scripture, in the Old and New Testaments.

The Apostle Paul repeatedly refers to the traditions which he passed on to the Christians and which they must keep. He exhorts the Thessalonians, *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle"* (2 Thess. 2:15). Tradition is what he himself handed on; it is the truth that he knew empirically. He wrote to the Corinthians, *"Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you"* (1 Cor. 11:2). St Paul, like all the God-seeing Prophets and Apostles, received the revelation from God and passed it on to his disciples, who are obliged to preserve it. The tradition that St Paul delivered to the Corinthians is the revelation that he received. This is the Gospel that saves human beings. He writes:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15:1-8).

This divine manifestation is the real Gospel that saves. It is the Orthodox tradition.

Referring elsewhere to handing over and receiving, the Apostle Paul speaks about the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

The Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, combined with the divine vision of the Risen Christ, is the distinguishing characteristic of Orthodox tradition. It is the Mystery of Holy Tradition.

Handing on the mystery regenerates man. For that reason the Apostle Paul writes, *"For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel"* (1 Cor. 4:15). Imparting the tradition regenerates man and the one who imparts it is a spiritual father. Without this act of passing on tradition there is no rebirth and salvation. This is why St Paul urges Christians not to accept other traditions: *"But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which* [they] *received from us"* (2 Thess. 3:6).

So Christians ought not to accept another Gospel, even if it is preached by an angel:

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:6-9).

Holy Tradition, therefore, is the transmission and experience of the revelation. It is not the same as the various traditions on the human level. We shall examine this in more detail below.

a) The Orthodox Tradition

The Orthodox tradition is the transmission of the whole revelatory truth granted to the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers, but also the transmission of the methodology by which someone can reach the vision of God. There are certain interpretative keys that show what is, and what is not, the tradition, and when the Orthodox tradition is at its peak and when it is in decline.

> "We should define clearly what the tradition is, and what can be regarded as the high point or the low point of the tradition. If this is not plainly and accurately defined, as Orthodox we shall continuously flounder. We may be in a flourishing state and say that we are in decline, or be in a state of decline and call it a high point. It depends on the criteria each one uses.
>
> What is a high point and what is a low point in Christianity? The fact that we are so influenced by the Westerners, Latins and Protestants makes it absolutely obvious."

We all talk about the Orthodox tradition, but we do not identify exactly what it is and of what it consists.

> "There is the Orthodox tradition that is preserved to this day among us, but no one understands exactly what constitutes this tradition and how he can judge."

The core of the Holy Tradition is purification, illumination and glorification. We stress the importance of illumination, which follows purification and precedes divine vision, because illumination, participation in the illuminating energy of God, forms the basis for participation in the energy of God that enables us to see Him.

The basic criterion of the Tradition is Holy Scripture, which constantly makes reference to the stages of perfection – purification, illumination and glorification – which lead to Pentecost. It is impossible to evaluate the Orthodox tradition without Pentecost.

> "Holy Scripture is always the basic criterion of the tradition. All the Fathers who agree with Holy Scripture are within the tradition.

From the point of view of the experience of divine inspiration, the highest form of revelation is Pentecost. The most sublime state of divine inspiration is Pentecost, which comes after the Old Testament and before the New Testament. The criterion for divine inspiration is therefore Pentecost itself."

Orthodox tradition is continuous within the Church and is also formulated in the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils and the works of the Fathers.

"Later there is the continuous tradition of the Church, the Fathers, the saints, what is called the ecclesiastical tradition. Then we have the decisions of the Local Councils. Later, however, we also have the spiritual state of the bishops, who gather at the Councils."

We should look at the tradition as a whole, in other words, that it is the entire life of the Church. "Even the Church's music has a dogmatic character." None of the liturgical arts can be seen in isolation from the essence of Orthodox tradition, namely, the stages of spiritual perfection, which lead to Pentecost.

"There are people for whom tradition can mean, for instance, certain liturgical traditions, iconographical traditions, musical traditions, traditions relating to clerical vestments, perhaps even beards.

There is a very profound sense among the Greek people that the traditions ought to be upheld. They are convinced that there was a time when this people worked wonders, did great things in history from both the nationalist and religious point of view. In this respect the Greeks are very like the Arabs, because the Arabs too had a glorious history with tremendous political power."

When we look at the tradition without Pentecost and what leads to Pentecost, it is simply superstition.

"Unfortunately, here in Greece, the greatest problem is that those who are religious are religious in a superstitious way. They are sensitive about keeping the tradition, without being aware of what keeping the tradition means or what purpose it serves."

Most of those who speak about tradition are conservers of the tradition. They preserve the outward forms of the tradition and are ignorant of their inner core.

b) The Essence of the Orthodox Tradition

What has been said previously shows us what exactly the Orthodox tradition is. We shall continue to consider this in the following sections. It is a serious subject, because there is a misconception on this point.

There is one single tradition in both the Old and the New Testaments.

"The Orthodox understanding of tradition is very like the perceptions that exist in the positive sciences. The aim in every positive science is to produce a descriptive analysis of the field with which that science is concerned, to enable the young people entering that science to be taught. Then, as they learn this science, with the help of books and live teaching, classes giving examples – such as an operation in the operating-theatre – and living praxis, the achievements of the science will be repeated, so that it will be perpetuated and improved. Thus there is a relationship between teacher, book, pupil and training. Training is also involved.

Well, all these elements make up the Orthodox tradition. Here there is Holy Scripture, which is the reference book for the subject of Orthodoxy. Then there are the writings of the Fathers of the Church. There are spiritual fathers and spiritual children. The relationship between the spiritual father, the spiritual child and the book are exactly the same as the relationship between the doctor and the medical student. Knowledge and practice are passed on from teacher to pupil. This has been going on for twenty centuries now, and the whole endeavour revolves around the liturgical texts preserved in our liturgical books.

Take any of the services and you will see that all the interest revolves round three factors: purification, illumination and glorification. These are the foundations. Apart from purification, illumination and glorification there is nothing else. That is to say, there is no theology.

There may be points of interest, or someone may be interested

in what Nebuchadnezzar or Samson or David did and take all these things as history. These are all historical records and may occupy a historian who can use them as historical sources. However, although it is possible for these figures to be studied independently of the science of Orthodox theology, this means using these texts for a purpose for which they were not intended. It is not the purpose of the texts simply to provide historical or philological information or to narrate the history of the kings and so on. Their aim is to relate the progress of a people that had devoted itself to doing the will of God. And they learned the will of God from people called Patriarchs or Prophets, who were their leaders.

Anyone who reads the Old Testament carefully to see who these Patriarchs and Prophets were will see something strange. They are the same people. In the lives of the saints and in the New Testament, a Patriarch or Prophet is someone who has reached glorification – the Fathers call glorification divine vision. He has passed through purification and arrived at illumination.

When the Fathers of the Church read the Old Testament, they read it as if already in the Old Testament there was purification and illumination, constant remembrance of God and noetic prayer, and they interpret the Psalms accordingly. The Psalms are interpreted as sacred songs expressing this experience of purification, illumination and glorification.

It makes no difference whether this is actually the case or not. We are not concerned about what the reality is. We are simply concerned about how the Fathers perceived this reality. This is a difficulty that you can encounter with professors of the Old Testament. Because our own Old Testament professors do not accept the Fathers' authority to interpret the Old Testament."

Tradition is not simply a study of the past. It is not archaeological remains from the past, but the method of purification, illumination and glorification, which is handed down and transmitted from generation to generation.

"He (St John the Forerunner) is the connecting link between the Old and New Testaments and this fact shows how the Fathers understand the essence of the tradition.

> Tradition is not simply a matter of receiving archaeological monuments from the past and giving them to future generations. Pre-eminently it is this method of purification, illumination and glorification, which is handed on from one generation to the next and constitutes the core of the tradition. All the other things are at the periphery of the tradition. The essence of the tradition is the transmission of this experience. So this tradition is transmitted now from the Old Testament to the New Testament by means of the Forerunner, and suddenly Christ Himself appears, teaching with human words and with miracles..."

Whatever contributes to the illumination of the faithful is the tradition; whatever does not lead to this end does not constitute the essence of the Orthodox tradition. There is the core of the tradition and the secondary element of the tradition.

> "We have the history of the Church, which is essentially the history of the tradition. If you want to define Orthodox tradition, you could draw a parallel with other traditions. For example, there is the tradition of medical science, the tradition of astronomy, the tradition of biology, chemistry and so on.
>
> To enable you to realise the significance of tradition from the patristic point of view, you should think of the Church as essentially a group of people in the state of illumination, who are making sure that one illuminated generation passes on illumination to future generations.
>
> The criterion for what belongs to the tradition and what is superfluous to the tradition, from the patristic viewpoint, is, I think, simple. Anything that is conducive to the illumination of the faithful is part of the tradition, and anything that is not conducive to illumination either does not belong to the tradition, or else is something secondary in the tradition. As means exist to guide or help man to progress from purification to illumination and from illumination to glorification, these means are indispensable for the Orthodox faith."

Tradition is whatever leads from rational worship to noetic worship.

"Rational worship is the foundation of the tradition. Starting from rational worship, afterwards the Spirit Himself turns it into noetic worship and conveys it to the nous in the state of illumination.

Among the Hindus the following takes place: they do natural exercises by which they separate the nous from the rational faculty. They simply empty the nous and proceed no further. They stop there. This emptying has certain effects on man's character, because through this emptying he becomes gentler and kinder."

This emptying of the rational faculty is not enough, however. The nous must acquire noetic worship. The shift from rational worship to noetic worship becomes clear through noetic prayer, which can also be found in the tradition of the Old Testament.

"Why are the Psalms so very important for the Church? Because the Psalms were prayers that were for noetic prayer. It seems that in the Hebrew tradition, in the prophetic Hebrew tradition, but also in the ancient Christian tradition, noetic prayer was not only prayed with prayer, what we call prayer today, but with psalms. That is why the Apostle Paul says, *"I will pray with the spirit and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing* [psalō] *with the spirit, and I will also sing* [psalō] *with the understanding"* (1 Cor. 14:15).

So noetic prayer is not just prayer but also psalmody, spiritual songs. We have examples from the tradition that noetic prayer was also prayed with psalms, in certain traditions. One example of this is St John Cassian, because St John Cassian teaches noetic prayer with Psalms. There is quite a lot of evidence for this practice."

This tradition is ascetic in character.

"Studying the issues from this point of view, we realise that the core of the tradition is the inheritance of the ascetic method, which leads to illumination and glorification. Theology is the expression of this experience of glorification. Above all else, our theology is an expression of glorification, with the aim of leading everyone to the same experiences that all those who expressed this theology had. Then we see that there is an amazing similarity with any other science."

With these presuppositions, we can speak of linking theology with piety, and piety is distinguished from pietism.

> "In the Orthodox tradition, theology and piety are exactly the same thing. There is no difference at all. These two, piety and theology, are identical and inseparable in the Orthodox tradition."

> "The priests, at least, were supposed to be in the state of illumination. For that reason the bishops went round finding men who were illuminated in order to ordain them. That was the tradition."

Man's progress through purification of the heart and illumination of the nous to reach glorification represents the stages of man's spiritual therapy. The Orthodox tradition is clearly therapeutic in character.

> "What emerges from the patristic tradition is that theology is purely therapeutic in character. The aim of theology is not to lead man to an understanding of God or to utterance about God, because expressions and concepts and words about God have one single purpose: man's healing. This is achieved when he passes from illumination to glorification."

When man's nous is not illumined, when it does not function according to God, he does not have uninterrupted remembrance of God. He is ill and needs treatment.

> "For that reason the Orthodox tradition always regarded man as a sick sinner, in the sense that his soul was sick, not in the sense of philosophical ethics."

It becomes obvious that the Fathers define illness of the soul (psyche), differently from secular psychiatry.

> "The patristic tradition contains things that neither psychiatry nor psychology even imagines exist."

The fact that someone whose nous is darkened is psychologically ill is clear in the apostolic tradition. Passing on the apostolic tradition means handing down the diagnosis and the cure.

The criterion for the patristic tradition is curing people and the success of the treatment. However, when "the therapeutic tradition is interrupted, there is no cure." The same happens in all the sciences. When

a Christian knows the therapeutic method, it means that he is an expert who carries on the Orthodox tradition.

Heresy is expressed by the fact that it does not cure people.

"The correct perception of the patristic tradition is that what cures man is Orthodox. What destroys man is heresy."

c) Passing on the Tradition

The tradition, which is man's cure, his union with God and participation in the mystery of Pentecost, is transmitted from generation to generation. The bearers of this tradition are those who are in the state of glorification.

"The patristic tradition is exactly the same. The glorified are the observers. They have the vision of God. They describe it, and the aim of the description is the repetition of the observation, that is to say, glorification, the expression of glorification, with the aim that others too may reach glorification.

Well, this is exactly the same scientific method that exists in all the positive sciences and in Orthodox theology. The difference is that, whereas in the positive sciences what is described is describable, in Orthodox theology what is described is indescribable."

Just as medical science is passed on from doctors to students, so the science of spiritual medicine is passed on to disciples, who become bearers of the same methodology. This is the perspective in which the tradition is inherited.

"The tradition of the positive sciences includes writings, teachers and pupils. The pupils succeed the teachers and they too become bearers of this scientific tradition. They become the future specialists. They too have pupils, and so on.

Now I wonder, if noetic prayer is the core of the Orthodox tradition, in what way does the Orthodox tradition differ from the positive sciences? As there is a tradition of medical science with a methodology, I wonder how the methodology of the patristic tradition differs from the methodology of the positive sciences today? In no way at all. I see no difference whatsoever."

The bishops are the guarantors of this transmission of the tradition, provided, of course, that they live the tradition.

> "The bishops of the Church are the university professors in the early Church. Now the bishops are the professors' students. In the early Church the bishops are the professors. They produce spiritual children. They have all the responsibility for therapeutic treatment within the parish, which is why the bishop gives the priest permission to act as a spiritual father."

Monasticism is also a bearer of this tradition.

> "Monasticism is the bearer of Orthodox spirituality. It conveys the Orthodox tradition called spiritual psychiatry. Spiritual medicine means therapeutic treatment of man's noetic faculty (energy). In the same way as a tradition exists in medical science with regard to psychiatrists, surgeons, microbiologists and so on, and in all the sciences, there is a tradition together with a methodology."

In the Orthodox Church there are people who keep this tradition alive. If this tradition lapses, Orthodoxy will be forgotten.

Nevertheless, many of the clergy are ignorant of this tradition of therapeutic treatment and make do with prayers.

> "The great problem, as far as I can see, from the point of view of methodology, is that Orthodoxy has fallen into the hands of people who have not practised the methodology of modern sciences in any experimental tradition. They see no need to produce results and are like doctors who treat people with words and promises without ever producing a result.
>
> Imagine, if you go to present day doctors. If you ask in a village, 'Do you have doctors? Do you have a hospital? Do you have operating theatres?' Then you have toothache and you go to the dental surgeon and, instead of starting with the equipment, he reads a prayer, and tells you that you will get better in the next life.
>
> Then you have a pain in your appendix and rush to the doctor. He takes you to the operating theatre. They lie you down on the table and instead of giving you injections the nurse comes and reads you an injection prayer. Then the doctor comes and reads the operation prayer, and afterwards they say: 'Very nice, thank you for coming...'

– 'But, Doctor, I am in pain...' – 'Never mind! When you die, you will be fine...' That is to say, whatever you do will be for the next life, from the point of view of medical science. That is the point we have reached today. Christians go to church and the priests themselves do not know what purification and illumination are, although purification and illumination are man's cure."

In many cases today the preservation of certain external elements of the tradition prevails, not the inheritance of the essence of the tradition.

d) Tradition and Traditions

Whereas this is the essence of the Orthodox tradition, in the West another tradition developed, which rejected these true criteria of the Orthodox tradition. Thus there is the Orthodox tradition and there are the other Christian traditions.

The Franco-Latins developed scholastic theology, which depends on syllogisms, not on the ascetic tradition. They replaced Roman patristic theology with philosophical scholastic theology, which is regarded as superior to patristic theology.

The main distinguishing characteristic of scholastic theology is syllogisms.

"Orthodox theology does not consist of a chain of syllogisms. The Frankish tradition is full of syllogisms. Reasoning is good exercise for the brain, but no one can rely on it, only on observation. You have to see and analyse. Orthodox theology means seeing, and theologising on the basis of the experience of divine vision, of glorification."

This Frankish, Papal theology was influenced by Augustine, who relies on the philosophical method of profound reflection on dogmas. Unfortunately this view of patristic theology also entered Orthodox textbooks. In addition, we encounter the idea in Augustine, as mentioned earlier, that the revelation of God is contained within Holy Scripture and also identical to it. This tradition of Western thought has also influenced the Orthodox. "We had grown up with this tradition of Western thought."

Nevertheless, elements of the Orthodox tradition could be found in the West until the Middle Ages.

> "My own study of the Western tradition is limited on this subject, but noetic prayer existed and seems to have survived until the Middle Ages."

After the Frankish-Papal tradition, which relied on the process of reasoning, the Protestant tradition developed, which relied on reason and ethics. Later the Russian tradition developed, which the Russians regarded as superior to both the patristic and scholastic traditions. The hesychastic tradition, which is the foundation of the Biblical and patristic tradition, was overlooked.

The Western tradition came into contemporary Greece through Russian theology.

> "Protestant influence did not come to Greece initially, because the Protestants in general were disliked by the Orthodox. And some respect had been created for the Papal tradition, since the Russians had some respect for that tradition. Even though the Russians also disliked the Papal tradition, they were nevertheless very much influenced by it."

The Western tradition was imported into Greek tradition by theologians studying in the West and Russia.

> "When they went to study in the West, they studied philosophical subjects along with theological, biblical and historical subjects. Then, on their return to the new Greek state, they dealt with all these subjects in a way that was detached from the tradition. There was no inner continuity with the tradition.
>
> There was a superficial continuity with the past, but there was no inner continuity with the past. One consequence was the literal destruction of monasticism in free Greece – monasticism was literally destroyed. A conscious effort was made to find a substitute for ruined monasticism in Greece. In those days Northern Greece was not yet Greece. Greece stretched as far as Arta and Volos. Above that was still the Ottoman Empire.
>
> In the modern Greek State, Orthodoxy had been completely uprooted, destroying the inner continuity of its tradition with the past.

They did not have the slightest clue about the patristic theological method."

The way in which theology is taught in Greece "is of Western and Russian origin. It has nothing to do with Byzantium." The Orthodox tradition, however, is completely unconnected with the Western tradition.

"The foundations of the Orthodox and Western traditions are completely different. Western traditions always start from happiness. I think that capitalism in the West mainly began from the idea that man's aim is happiness, which is achieved through individual satisfaction. Man is satisfied either by God or by his fellow human beings.

I see no essential difference from being in possession of God in order to be happy, because this is Augustine's language. Man becomes the possessor of God. He actually calls it 'possession of God', *possessio Dei*, when someone has God as a possession. It is his language."

The Orthodox Church conveys the hesychastic tradition from generation to generation. Most significant of all, it always struggles not only against the devil, but also against the other traditions, which undermine the genuine Orthodox tradition.

"On this journey we have the Church as a historical reality, which passes on illumination from one generation to the next. From this viewpoint, the struggle of the Church is not just its inner struggle against the devil, temptations and so on, so that everyone can reach illumination. The tradition itself comes constantly into conflict with things outside the Church."

e) Interpreting Holy Tradition through the Sciences of Astronomy and Medicine

Everything mentioned so far shows what the Orthodox tradition is and how it differs from non-Orthodox and other religious traditions. In this section we will examine this issue by taking examples from two sciences: astronomy and medicine.

First of all, it should be stressed once more that the Church's tradition is the experience of the God-seeing saints, Prophets, Apostles and Fathers. They lived this experience by the revelation of God and conveyed it to their spiritual children, and it is recorded in their writings. Thus three factors are very closely linked: the saints who behold God, their illuminated nous, by means of which they share in the experience of revelation, and their writings, in which the experience is recorded in created words and concepts. The basic elements of the tradition are the glorified saints, who are the bearers of the tradition.

> "The Fathers of our Fathers in the Old Testament, the Prophets, had glorification without the human nature of Christ. Afterwards, the Apostles also had glorification, with the human nature of Christ. After Pentecost we have another kind of glorification, with the experiences that they have after glorification, because the same experience of Pentecost continues within the Church and has not come to an end. Given that the experience of Pentecost has not come to an end, the bishops, who have this experience, are led to the same experience and know what they are talking about.
>
> Because of the continuity of this tradition, the Orthodox patristic tradition resembles modern biology, chemistry, astronomy and medical science. In this way the tradition of the Church is continued empirically. What experience, ultimately? The fact that cures continue and people are cured. People continue to learn the truth from astronomy, medical science, biology, in other words, from the experience of purification, the experience of illumination, which is the cure of the human personality, and the experience of glorification, which is the telescope and microscope of Orthodox theology. This is why we believe that we are on the right path and are still within the tradition."

Those who behold God are like scientific astronomers, who examine the star-filled sky and discover stars that are invisible to the naked eye by using telescopes. Whatever they see they record in their writings. The saints do the same.

> "We find this tradition dotted here and there throughout the writings of the Fathers, but mainly in the writings of St Symeon the New Theologian, all his disciples and among those referred to as

hesychasts. What is this tradition? It is extremely simple, as simple as can be."

It is divine vision of the uncreated energy of God and guiding people on the basis of this experience. The vision of the inexpressible reality takes place by means of a special organ, the nous, which is illumined by the Holy Spirit. Those who behold God are in the state of illumination. They reach the state of glorification, participate in the Light and see the Light. *"In Your light we shall see light"*. On this point they resemble astronomers who see stars that are invisible to the naked eye by using special instruments called telescopes. Also, anyone who wishes to confirm the observations of astronomers has to use the same instruments. This means that any Christian who wishes to verify the experience of the God-seeing saints has to acquire an illuminated nous.

"When there are doubts concerning astronomical writings, we take telescopes and by means of telescopes we confirm the correct interpretation of the books concerning astronomy. One looks, another looks, a third one looks and so it goes on. And all those who check with telescopes, radio telescopes etc, say, 'Ah! That is what those notes mean. Did you see it when you looked through the telescope? That is the explanation.'

And the correct interpretation continues down the years, because there are people who see and know how to use telescopes and radio telescopes and the equipment with which they measure distance analogous with the speed of light - spectrographs, spectrograms - they even know how to measure material composition, they can even measure speed with them."

This example shows that astronomers are closely linked with telescopes and writings. In the same way, doctors are closely associated with equipment and operating theatres and with curing people.

If, however, astronomers lose their telescopes and start to imagine stars or to speculate about them, they become astrologers. The same can happen to doctors, who, if they lose their equipment, become charlatans.

"If astronomers lose their telescopes and no longer know how to handle the various pieces of astronomical equipment, they are

reduced to being astrologers instead of astronomers. And, given that they have become astrologers, and the others have become sham doctors and pseudo-biologists and so on, are those who are no longer able to handle the scientific equipment of Orthodox theology astronomer-theologians or astrologer-theologians?"

In other words, true theologians are those who see God, who are like astronomers. When, however, without their nous being illuminated, they theologise by using speculation and their imagination instead, they turn into speculative thinkers and scholastics. Subsequently, when the astronomer, who has turned into an astrologer because he does not have the right equipment but uses speculation, takes part in a conference of astronomers, his participation in the conference does not in itself convert him into a scientific astronomer.

"This is the major question from the scientific point of view: Can someone who has become an astrologer, because he does not know how to use astronomical equipment, consider that this weakness is compensated for by the fact that he attends conferences? If astronomers forget about astronomical equipment and simply preserve the books about astronomy and misinterpretations begin, will they interpret the books about astronomy correctly, because they have gathered at a conference? I am simply posing the question. Will the conference produce correct astronomy? Will it upgrade astrology to astronomy? Is it the conference that will achieve this? Or will it be a conference of astrologers?"

The same can be observed in respect of doctors who are unable to use their instruments and equipment or operating-theatres in order to treat the sick. They are unable to cure people, and cannot be regarded as doctors merely because they attend medical congresses.

"Doctors have inherited the equipment of medical science, all the tools for surgical operations, from the past. We have X-ray equipment, hospitals, operating theatres and so on. What if the doctors who know how to use all this equipment disappeared, and untrained women who dabbled in practical medicine came in from the villages? And if the state made these untrained women responsible for the Universities and they taught the students, as the students were

involved in strikes and politics, and these untrained women ended up being accepted by medical science, then they would start to be dangerous.

Let us suppose that doctors have reached the point of no longer knowing how to use these tools, but use them at random. If the radiologist graduated from the University of Thessaloniki in 1870, so he does not know how to read X-rays and makes bad diagnoses, and the doctor performs bad surgical operations, and so on. So instead of people being cured, 90% die and 10% are cured. Whereas in America, France, England, Switzerland and Germany 60% are cured, in Greece 10% are cured. Well, if the Greek doctors have a conference will the success rate increase to 90% or 100%? What is the use of a conference of doctors who do not know medical science? What good does it do? Do you follow what I am trying to say?"

By analogy, the same happens with bishops who do not have the suitable equipment, an illuminated nous, when they participate in the Council. They cannot be real theologians and they are unable to know the tradition. They are not illuminated simply because they take part in a Council. Illumination comes first.

"As a researcher I raise a topic: This bishop has received his diploma, but would never have received it except that his Metropolitan continuously phoned up all his professors, and he received his diploma with five marks, whereas he deserved no marks at all. If he, together with seventy such bishops, gathers in a conference of bishops called a Council, will they make correct decisions? Because the Holy Spirit descended? Or is this a parallel situation with the situation in all the other positive sciences? What is the difference between theology and the other positive sciences? Do you follow my argument?

I am afraid that I am telling you things that are rather shocking. How can I put it? I am, however, obliged as a researcher and historian - because my own special subject is history - as a historian I am obliged, when I undertake historical research and find certain things, I am obliged to inform you."

"From this point of view, if the Orthodox bishops, who are disciples of those theologians who are not followers of the patristic

tradition, ever gather in a Council, will the fact that they are meeting together in a conference make them Fathers of the Church? And if we call the conference an Ecumenical Council, can it ever reach a correct decision?

Only if they copy Holy Scripture and the patristic texts to the letter, without adding a word of their own, only then is there any hope of them reaching an Orthodox decision, only then. If, however, they add words that are not in Holy Scripture and the patristic tradition, it is almost certain that they will produce a decision that is dogmatically incorrect. It is almost certain. Guaranteed! Guaranteed!"

Scientific astronomers have criteria in order to verify their conclusions. Of course there are books, but there are also telescopes that confirm their observations. The astrologers, who rely on speculation and imagination, have no criteria to separate which group of astrologers are genuine and which are not.

"If there is a group of astrologers, do they have the right to denounce another group of astrologers? Can one group say, 'We are better astrologers than the others', and the other group say, 'We are better than you', and someone else to say, 'No, we are better than you' and so on, and can the astrologers argue among themselves? With what criteria?

Can one say, 'You know, I foresaw that Russia would go into Afghanistan.' And the other replies, 'What do you mean "I foresaw", as the newspapers wrote that the President of Afghanistan invited the Russian troops. What sort of prophecy is that, as they said that he invited them? The fact that you say "sent" shows it cannot be a prophecy.' And so on and so forth."

This happens in Orthodox theology too. The God-seeing saints, like scientific astronomers, have secure criteria and, like true doctors, they have successes, because they use suitable instruments and are part of the Orthodox tradition. Heretics, by contrast, resemble astrologers who do not have secure criteria, as each one uses his own speculation, and they do not achieve success.

"From success you can see that something is working correctly.

Every science ought to have an aim, and whenever it successfully achieves its aim it is a proper science which has judgment and knows what it is talking about.

I pose the question: Is theology the only science in which anyone can pick up Bultmann and Cullmann and say whatever he likes without any check? Should there not be some control in theological matters? Should anyone be able to say whatever he likes? He cannot say anything he likes. There ought to be some sort of check. Should it be the same as in every other religion, where everyone believes according to his imagination?

If there is to be a scientific check on Orthodox theology, as there is in other positive sciences, the details should be described and put into practice, so that there will be sound foundations for the Orthodox tradition, as part of today's world. If such foundations do not exist, and the assertions of the Orthodox cannot be checked, then it is imagination. Because when someone cannot get through the test, there is no tangible sign, nothing to show that the teaching of the Orthodox Church is correct. In such a case, what is the difference between Orthodox theology and the other religions in the world? Just as an Orthodox Christian thinks that he has the right to deny the authenticity of the various religions, in the same way, the other religions have the right to do the same from a scientific point of view."

The teaching of the Church is true, because it is successful, since it leads people to glorification, sanctity, and the confirmation of this experience is the sacred relics. This is where the value of the Orthodox tradition lies.

"If there is no scientific means of checking the teachings of the Orthodox Church, then one wonders how Orthodox theology differs from other religions? What is the difference?

If we suppose that the aim of theology is to produce sacred relics which have characteristics a, b and c, and we say, 'Fine, we have produced all these relics. Come here. Here is the Church. Look, the relics have these characteristics. Let's go to another Church. If the other Church has sacred relics as well, what is happening? It means that they have something similar.

> If the aim of Orthodox theology is to make saints, someone can say to us, 'Yes, Orthodox theology produces saints, but surely heretical theories produce saints as well?'"

When correct methodology does not exist and speculation prevails instead, and when correct theology does not exist, therapeutic results are not achieved.

The value of the Orthodox tradition lies in the fact that it sanctifies man by uniting him with the God-man Christ, using Orthodox methodology. The Papal Christians recommend their followers to do good works in order to see God and be saved, so they have rejected the neptic-hesychastic tradition. The Protestants feel regenerated by God, so they do not have a therapeutic method. The Orthodox know that they need to be cured starting in this life by the grace of God and with their own corroboration, so that they may encounter God in a state of being cured, and this encounter may be Paradise for them, not Hell. This is what being cured means. In the Orthodox Church man reaches glorification and his body becomes a sacred relic, something that is not observed in other Confessions and religions. This confirms the truth of the Orthodox faith.

> "I want to emphasise the fact that every science is judged by the end result, not just by the means. Because if a doctor appears and begins to carry out surgical operations, and other doctors follow the traditions, and he begins to do a surgical operation, the others say, 'But he will kill the patient by doing that. What is he doing? We have never seen anyone doing an operation in that way before,' and people are indignant, because they know that surgical operations are not usually performed in that manner, but are done differently. However, they see that he cures the patient. Then he repeats the same method once again. When they see good results produced five or six times, will the doctors continue to say that the method is no good? Then the doctors will not say that it is not a good method. Because if it were not a good method, how would it achieve so many successes?"

In the Orthodox tradition those who see God – the Prophets, Apostles and saints – are closely associated with their illuminated nous and

their divinely inspired writings. That is why people are cured. There are successful cures, people continue to be sanctified, to reach illumination and glorification. Also, the interpretation of divinely inspired writings requires divinely inspired commentators, who have the same illuminated nous and the same tradition as the divinely inspired writers of Holy Scripture and the patristic books.

In the Orthodox Church we have both God-seeing saints, whose nous is illumined, and writings, so Holy Scripture is linked with Holy Tradition. When the 'astronomers' (God-seers) and the 'telescopes' (illuminated nous and glorification) are lost, the writings are also misinterpreted. Then the astronomers turn into astrologers who speculate, and their conference becomes a conference of astrologers instead of astronomers.

The conclusion is that revelation is the manifestation of the Word to human beings, unincarnate in the Old Testament, incarnate in the New Testament. The Prophets, Apostles and saints are bearers of the revelation, the empirical theologians who behold God. The books of the Old and New Testaments, together with the writings of the Fathers, the dogmas and the whole life of the Church, are the living monuments of the revelation. Purification, illumination and glorification are the essence of the Orthodox tradition, which leads man to glorification, to participation in the mystery of Pentecost.

Epilogue

The foregoing chapters, which will be further clarified in the next Volume, have presented the robust theological thought of Fr. John Romanides, who combined dogmatics with ascetic teaching, revelation with experience, the Old Testament with the New, a university chair with the solitude of the ascetic. This is the life of the Gospel, which can be lived in any country by anyone in whom the Holy Spirit acts and who responds to His action.

As final words I would like to record four interesting points to be found in the spoken teaching of Fr. John Romanides.

1. The unity of the Church is expressed in the Divine Eucharist, in dogma and in prayer. None of these three aspects of ecclesiastical life can be turned into an absolute, nor can any one of them be independent of the others. Andrew Sopko, in his study on Fr. John Romanides, showed that his thought moved in an Orthodox perspective. Fr. John complemented the views of others, who supported the unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist, or in the bishop, or in both together, by presenting with sufficient emphasis not only the value of the Divine Eucharist but also the value Holy Scripture (Old and New Testaments), the dogmas of the Church and prayer, especially the prayer of the nous in the heart, which leads to glorification. This enables us to understand that ecclesiastical life has a fullness that brings man peace.[1]

At the Divine Eucharist members of the Church are present who have been baptised and chrismated, and in whom this gift of grace has been activated by asceticism and prayer. The Creed (the dogmas of the Faith) is also confessed at the Divine Liturgy and the word about the revelation, which is contained in the Old and New Testaments, is heard. This revelatory word is interpreted by the bishop himself, who

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1. Cf. Andrew J. Sopko, *Prophet of Roman Orthodoxy, The Theology of John Romanides*, Synaxis Press, Dewdney BC, Canada 1998, pp. 2 ff., 150 ff.

ought to be a prophet and teacher, and not just preside over the Eucharistic assembly.

Christ's two disciples on their way to Emmaus listened to the Risen Christ Himself – without yet recognising Him – expounding to them "in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself", "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets". During the course of this interpretation the disciples' hearts were burning, and afterwards they said, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" Later they recognised Him during the meal, when He took bread, blessed it, "and broke it, and gave it to them" (Luke 24: 13-25). This signifies that the Christians' journey to knowledge of God, during the mystery of the Divine Eucharist, passes through the burning of the heart. This comes about through the action of the Word of God during the teaching, but also during the prayer. Without this spiritual burning of the heart, the risen Christ is not recognised during the mystery of the Divine Eucharist.

2. The hesychastic tradition, of which Fr. John speaks, is not a way of life that the Church adopted from other – Hindu, philosophical or Sufi – traditions, but is the authentic prophetic, apostolic and patristic life. In other words, the hesychastic tradition was not invented by the Fathers at various periods, but is the genuine life of God's friends. It is the path to glorification and sanctification.

This hesychastic tradition was formulated by the Fathers using three terms: purification, illumination and glorification. This is not a revelation to a few Fathers or teachers, but the life that was discovered in the Old and New Testaments and indicated by the unincarnate and incarnate Word and by His friends, who came into communion with Him.

Holy Scripture not only presents this life but also the terms: 'purification', 'illumination' and 'glorification-perfection'. In the Fathers, the term 'glorification-perfection' is referred to as 'theosis'. A large number of scriptural passages can be found to support this. And even if these terms were used by Origen – who has been condemned by the Church – or his disciples, this is of no great importance, when the Church itself, as a spiritual organisation, has adopted this terminology. In the same way as the Church adopted the philosophers' terminology for dogmas, without it being supposed that theology had changed into philosophy, so the Church used terms like purification, illumination and glorifi-

cation for the method of glorification, without this tradition being regarded as 'Origenistic'.

St Cyril of Alexandra writes in a letter to Eulogios the Priest, "It is not necessary to avoid and reject everything that the heretics say, because they confess many things, some of which we too confess"[2]*. All those who have a different point of view, however, also reproach the great Cappadocian Fathers, St Maximos the Confessor, St Symeon the New Theologian, St Gregory Palamas and others, whom the Church has placed in the highest spiritual rank, condemning those who reacted against their teaching.*

Even the position of the hesychast's body during the practice of prayer, the words of the prayer and the way in which the nous is concentrated, as St Gregory Palamas analysed in detail and theologically, are to be found in various passages of the Old or New Testaments and are identified by the early Fathers of the Church. It is therefore unnecessary to ascribe them to outside influences.

3. It is true that, in order to record the dogmatic and hesychastic tradition, the holy Fathers borrowed the technical terms of their era, which came from philosophy, as the followers of 'Hellenised Christianity' used these terms. Even in these circumstances, however, there is a huge difference between word and concept. St Gregory Palamas makes a significant statement: "If one of the Fathers utters something the same as those outside, this is just a matter of the words; with regard to the concepts there is a great difference. According to Paul, they [the Fathers] *have 'the mind* [nous] *of Christ', whereas the others* [those outside] *speak from human understanding, if nothing worse."*[3] *It is clear from this passage that there is a difference between concepts and words. The concepts are revelational, whereas the words are taken from the surrounding world, although they too, once they have been adopted by the Fathers and upheld by Councils, are Orthodox.*

We cannot, therefore, identify any influences on the Fathers from other Christian or non-Christian traditions with regard to the content

2. Cited in Dr. John Anthony Cramer, *Catenae in Evangelia S. Matthaei et S. Marci*, Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, Hildesheim, 1967 (reprint of 1840 edition), p. 4 – in Greek

3. St Gregory Palamas, Works, EPE, Vol. 2., Thessaloniki 1982, p. 86 – in Greek

of their teaching. Any such interpretation undermines the experience of the Holy Spirit granted to our saints. Nor can we characterise the teaching of the holy Fathers as 'Origenist', 'Evagrian' or 'Macarian'. The energy of the Holy Spirit is abundantly present in the Church. All those who really live in the Body of Christ and receive the grace of the Holy Spirit and keep it active have the same tradition and the same experience.

Consequently the genuine hesychastic life is to be found among the Prophets, Apostles, Fathers and all the saints of the Church in general. Any other interpretation is anthropocentric and hence destructive and subversive to the Orthodox tradition.

4. The question arises of how to interpret the teaching of the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers. For example, every genuine interpretation of scientists in different fields (doctors, mathematicians, physicists etc) is undertaken by the scientists themselves in the same specialist area. Doctors understand one another, mathematicians understand one another, and so on. Thus saints understand one another, and the best interpretation of the teaching of the saints does not come from speculative thinkers who philosophise, nor from heretics, but from saints who live the same evangelical life as the friends of God. Any attempt at interpretation with different presuppositions is mistaken. This is how Jehovah's Witnesses and the various Protestant organisations interpret Holy Scripture.

Fr. John Romanides, who studied philosophy, knew how Christianity had changed in the West. He also knew the hesychastic tradition of the true hesychasts. He avoided the danger of misinterpretations and set before us the authenticity of the Orthodox tradition. Hesychasm is the genuine prophetic, apostolic and patristic way of life. It is the experience of the mystery of Christ's Cross and Resurrection. We therefore owe a great debt of gratitude to Fr. John Romanides, because his teaching is Orthodox and is based on the Ecumenical Councils. Hesychastic teaching – as expressed by St Gregory Palamas – was guaranteed by the Councils of the 14th century (1341-1351). It is significant that the Synodal Tome of 1347, after excommunicating and denouncing Barlaam, goes on to state:

"However, if anyone else at all is ever found thinking or saying or writing the same things against the aforementioned most worthy hiero-

monk Gregory Palamas and the monks with him, or rather against the holy theologians and this Church, we vote also against him and put him under the same condemnation [excommunication and expulsion], *whether he be a member of the clergy or a layman.*

We declare the aforementioned most worthy hieromonk Gregory Palamas and the monks in accord with him... to be most steadfast champions and protagonists and helpers of the Church and piety...

And this in all respects lawful and canonical vote and decision is to be observed unchanged for ever and ever, by the grace of Christ"[4]

The same was repeated in the Synodical Tome of the Council of 1351, which has been regarded by Orthodox as the Ninth Ecumenical Council and has all the characteristic features of an Ecumenical Council[5].

The theology of hesychasm, as teaching, terminology and methodology, is Orthodox in every way. Denying it goes against the Orthodox teaching of the Church and constitutes heresy.

End of Volume 1

Glory be to God

4. PG 152, cols 1282-1284 - in Greek

5. See John Karmiris, *Ta Dogmatika kai Symbolika Mnimeia tis Orthodoxou Katholikis Ekklisias*, Vol. 1, Athens 1960, p 376 and Dimitrios Koutsouri, *Synodoi kai Theologia yia ton Hesychasmo*, Metropolis of Thiva and Levadia, Athens 1997 - in Greek

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